

THE PURE DESIRE TO KNOW

A thesis

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## INTRODUCTION

It is an observable fact that all men seek and acquire knowledge. Francis Bacon recognized and mentioned the fact that

Some men seek knowledge out of a natural curiosity and inquisitive temper, some to entertain the mind with variety and delight, some for ornament and reputation, some for victory and contention; many for lucre and a livelihood, and but a few for employing the Divine gift of reason to the use and benefit of mankind. Thus some appear to seek in knowledge a touch for a searching spirit, others a walk for a wondering mind.<sup>1</sup>

There are philosophers who agree with Francis Bacon and there are some who say that there is no desire for knowledge, that man must be convinced of the value of learning. This study was undertaken because of a conviction that man does desire knowledge and that this desire has initiated the progress man has made from the beginning of time.

One purpose of this study was to define the pure desire to know in terms of its purity, its detachment, its drive simply to know. A distinction between this desire and other desires is made from the definitions given by Father Bernard J.F. Lonergan whose book "Insight" was the primary source of this study.

A further purpose of the study was to show the advantages of the pure desire to know as the source of all knowledge, in so far as it is the pure desire to know which is prior to all concepts or even questions. Before man can entertain his mind or earn a livelihood or benefit mankind through his knowledge he must desire that knowledge. It is true that there may be benefits accruing when the desire is less than pure, but the first questions were in response to man's desire simply to know. It is through the pure desire to know that man rises to ever higher viewpoints. This must be done on an organized basis; the scientific method is one suggested by Father Lonergan, but the pure desire to know can use any method. However, if the questioning is random there may be only an accumulation of unrelated insights with no accompanying upward progress.

The questioning man does is directed by his senses, in response to the pure desire to know. The pure desire to know is unrestricted, detached and free. There may be restrictions on the desire to know; it may become interested, restricted, biased and limited. This can result in decline. If man is to continue to progress, if progress is to be real, then the pure desire to know must be guarded and maintained by a conscious effort of the will.

## THE PURE DESIRE TO KNOW

### Definition

That man desires to know has been acknowledged or accepted by philosophers from earliest times. Some of these speak of it as such, some call it by other names, some include it among the intrinsic drives which have brought man to his present state in the universe, some simply take it for granted and never refer to it in the explication of the cognitive process, and some few deny that there is a pure desire for knowledge in man.

For the purposes of this study we accept the fact that the pure desire to know does exist. Father Lonergan, whose book "Insight" is the prime source, tells us "The fact of inquiry is beyond all doubt. It can absorb a man...It can withdraw him from other interests, other pursuits, other pleasures."<sup>1</sup> This is the foundation on which the study is built.

One early philosopher who adverted to the pure desire to know was Socrates. The leading principle of his philosophy is "that all men of necessity desire happiness. Happiness consists in the possession of what is truly good."<sup>2</sup> It is true that this principle is implied, but it is the basis of the Socratic dialogues. Since for Socrates, the supreme good was wisdom and

wisdom is that which satisfied reason, we can assume that his principle is an affirmation of the pure desire to know.

What Socrates implied, Aristotle asserted openly and on many occasions. "All men by nature desire to have knowledge. An indication of this is the delight we take in the senses, quite apart from the use we make of them...; we prefer sight to practically every other sense. The reason for this, is that more than any other sense, it enables us to get to know things."<sup>3</sup> That this desire is an attribute of man is further attested to by his statement. "Now, knowledge is an activity of the soul and so are perception and belief, so too, are desires, wishes and appetites in general."<sup>4</sup> In his description of wisdom, he says, "It is from a feeling of wonder that men start now and did start in earliest times to practise philosophy. Originally they wondered about things that were handy, then as they went forward bit by bit, on this line of inquiry they got bewildered about larger issues like the changes of the moon, the sun, and the stars, and the origin of the universe."<sup>5</sup>

Saint Thomas Aquinas believed that the desire to know is an attribute of man, teaching, "As a natural desire for knowledge is in all intellectual natures, there is also in them a natural desire to dispel ignorance."<sup>6</sup> In the Summa Theologica, he asserts that this desire for knowledge is a manifestation of man's desire for God.

There are some philosophers who disagree on this point, but it is sufficient for this study to note that the pure desire to know is considered to be an attribute of man, whether that desire is a tendency towards the Divine Substance or toward some other knowledge. If man desires God and he can attain a knowledge of God then he desires knowledge. The desire to know is evident in the fact that modern philosophers are much concerned with the study of man, his position in the world, his intellect, his achievements, and his relationships. Every action, word, and thought, is analyzed and studied. Man studies himself because he wants to understand himself, he wants to know about himself, and his world. Various philosophers have expressed this concern of man for himself. To Nikolai Berdyaev "Man lives in an agony, and he wants to know who he is, where he comes from, and whither' he is going."<sup>7</sup> Dr. C.G. Jung reveals his conviction that "...Man's learning capacity turns out to be a genuine drive towards progressive transformations of human behaviour."<sup>8</sup> These statements demonstrate a belief in the pure desire to know, from slightly different points of view. Dr. Jung's 'capacity to learn' may not be what we understand as the pure desire to know, but it is a drive towards knowledge which initiated 'progressive transformations' and caused men to ask questions concerning his own situation.

Socrates equated the desire for knowledge with a desire for the supreme good and Saint Thomas called it the manifestation of the desire for God. Many modern philosophers believe that the pure desire to know is desire to love...both God and men. It is in some way a tendency towards altruism. The more one knows the more one will love; it will be through love that man will reach the full development towards which he tends, it is through knowledge that he will attain that love.

Although it would seem that it is the pure desire to know which motivates a man to seek an education, there is at least one educator whose philosophy of education rejected the notion that humans tend towards knowledge naturally. John Dewey built an educational system on the premise that knowledge is the handmaiden of science, that desires must be subjugated to facts. He says that man is a knowing being, but desires only food, clothing, companionship. He will learn voluntarily only those things which enable him to acquire his bodily needs more readily. However, he does concede that "in the beginning men were moved to inquiry chiefly by avid curiosity and impatience with the ignorance and confusion they found around them."<sup>9</sup> This avid curiosity is at least very much like the pure desire to know, but in Dewey's philosophy this curiosity was either lost or abandoned for he also says "We need



to recognize that ordinary consciousness of ordinary man left to himself is a creature of desires rather than of intellectual study, inquiry or speculation. Man ceases to be actuated by hopes, fears, loves, and hates, only when he is subjected to a discipline which is foreign to human nature, which is, from the standpoint of natural man, artificial."<sup>10</sup> Intellectual study, then, is not an object of desire; it is placed in a position that is opposed to natural desire.

Other educators have held far different views. John Henry Cardinal Newman says "...the most unpropitious circumstances have been unable to conquer an ardent desire for the acquisition of Knowledge."<sup>11</sup> This educator quotes Cicero as having laid down the principle that we are, all of us, drawn to the pursuit of knowledge. Unlike Dewey who denied that intellectual activity was one of man's desires, Cardinal Newman considers that knowledge is the first object to which we are attracted after our physical wants have been attained. This is another point on which he quotes Cicero. "As soon as we escape from the pressure of necessary cares, forthwith we desire to see, to hear and to learn."<sup>12</sup> There is no suggestion that without submission to discipline man would not seek knowledge; on the contrary it is most natural that the pursuit of learning follow immediately man's most basic tendencies.

In consideration of the two views outlined above it is relevant to quote Father Lonergan on the difference between the desire to know and other desires. "This desire (to know) has been called pure because it differs radically from other desires. It is to be known by giving free rein to intelligent and rational consciousness. It is indeed impalpable, but it is also powerful. It pulls man out of the solid routine of perception and conation, instinct and habit, doing and enjoying. It holds him with the fascination of problems. It engages him in the quest of solutions. It makes him aloof to what is not established. It compels assent to the unconditioned. It is the cool shrewdness of common sense, the disinterestedness of science, the detachment of philosophy...This pure desire has an objective. It is the desire to know. As mere desire, it is for the satisfaction of acts of knowing, of understanding correctly. But as pure desire, as cool, disinterested, detached, it is not for cognitional acts, and the satisfaction they give their subject, but for cognitional contents, for what is to be known."<sup>13</sup> Here we can perceive the avid curiosity of which Dewey speaks, but there is no suggestion that this is operative only in the most primitive stage of man's progress. Another paragraph may make this clearer: "When a man has nothing to do, he may ask questions. The first moment is an

awakening to one's intelligence. It is release from the dominance of the biological drive and from the routine of everyday living. It is the emergence of wonder. It is the desire to understand."<sup>14</sup>

Father Lonergan gives several definitions of the pure desire to know. He states in his preface that insights emerge in "the dynamic context of detached and disinterested inquiry."<sup>15</sup> In his use of the example of Archimedes' discovery he explains "the process of learning is marked by an initial period of darkness in which one gropes about insecurely, in which one cannot see where he is going, in which one cannot grasp what all the fuss is about."<sup>16</sup> Here, while we are not told expressly that the pure desire to know is the period in which one is groping we are led to infer that we grope, we want to see, we want to know 'what all the fuss is about', because he goes on to state that the issues become clearer, what was mysterious becomes understandable.

Father Lonergan specifically defines the desire to know as "The dynamic orientation manifested in questions for intelligence and reflection."<sup>17</sup> ...Again he says "The desire to know is simply the inquiring and critical spirit of man"<sup>18</sup> and "Initially in each individual the pure desire is a dynamic orientation to a totally unknown."<sup>19</sup>

The pure desire is the intelligent and rational basis from which we discern between correct and incorrect answers, ...in brief, the pure desire to know is the source, not only of answers but also of their criteria, and not only of questions, but also of the grounds on which they are screened. For it is intelligent inquiry and reasonable reflection that just as much yield the right questions as the right answers."<sup>20</sup>

Again he says:

The immanent source of transcendence in man is his detached disinterested desire to know. As it is the source of all his questions, it is the origin of the radical, further questions that take him beyond the defined limits of particular issues. The desire in question then, is a desire to understand correctly... To affirm that the desire is unrestricted is not to affirm that man's understanding is unrestricted. For the desire is prior to understanding and is compatible with not understanding. Were it not, the effort and process of inquiry would be impossible; for inquiry is a manifestation of a desire to understand.

Secondly to affirm that the desire is unrestricted is not to affirm that the attainment of understanding will be unrestricted. For the transition of the desire to the attainment has conditions that scientific and philosophic methods exist. Hence to affirm an unrestricted desire to understand is to affirm only one of the many conditions for the attainment of unrestricted understanding."<sup>21</sup>

The pure desire to know is not merely spontaneous. It is the root of intelligent and rational selfconsciousness, and it operates prior to our insights, our judgments, and our decisions."<sup>22</sup>

From these statements we may conclude that the pure desire to know is the spirit of wonder, the unrestricted inquiring disposition of man. It must be made clear also that "A natural desire in regard to more perfect knowledge always remains. The knowledge we already possess gives rise to a natural desire for more perfect knowledge."<sup>23</sup> The desire remains as long as there is any kind of ignorance. Etienne Gilson says "The long pilgrimage of the mind from mathematics, through physics and biology, to metaphysics, is a visible manifestation of a desire without which there would be neither metaphysics nor natural theology. Man naturally desires to know the first cause just as he naturally desires to know the last end."<sup>24</sup>

Michael Novak, discussing the pure desire to know as found in "Insight" agrees that the pure desire is continually operative: "The detached, disinterested drive to understand criticizes and revises itself, so as to respect and adapt itself to those things it questions. It is supple and free."<sup>25</sup>

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin calls this desire a force or instinct "which tells us that, to be faithful to Life, we must know; we must know more and still more; we must tirelessly and unceasingly search for something, we know not what, which will appear in the end to those

who have penetrated to the very heart of reality."<sup>26</sup>

Concerning the continuing aspect of the pure desire to know Father Lonergan has this to say "Neither centuries of inquiry nor enormous libraries of answers have revealed any tendency for the stream of further questions to diminish ... We may be confident that the future will resemble the past, for unless someone comes forth to speak for stupidity and silliness, he will not be able to claim that some questions are to be brushed aside."<sup>27</sup>

Pope Pius XI adverts to the desire to know in an Encyclical Letter "...They feel more keenly in themselves the impulse toward a perfection which is higher, which impulse is implanted in their rational nature by the Creator Himself. This perfection they seek to acquire by means of education...Their restlessness will never cease till they direct their efforts to God, the goal of all perfection."<sup>28</sup>

It is apparent to all that the world has changed and is continuing to change. It is not so readily apparent that these changes are the result of man's pure desire to know. Insights come in answer to questions and man always has asked questions about the world in which he lives. As answers were received to his questions further questions offered themselves for solution. The solution

accumulated as did the questions. Mr. Lyman Bryson, former professor of Education at Columbia University, has pointed out that all the advances made in this century have long histories. He says "There's a persistent continuity to knowledge, the web of rational thought is unbroken. The ideas which we associate with certain men were not entirely original with them. All of them developed out of ideas that had been announced long before, proposed in various forms by thinkers who lacked the training, the tools or the persistence to work them out scientifically."<sup>20</sup>

The fact of the matter is that the ideas did continue to raise further questions, did keep the pure desire operative, did awaken new sources of wonder, did accumulate new solutions in a process that is still taking place and will continue to do so. On this point, Cardinal Newman, the proponent of the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake concedes: "That further advantages accrue to us and redound to others by its possession, over and above what it is in itself, I am very far indeed from denying; but independent of these, we are satisfying a direct need of our nature by its very acquisition."

Karl Jaspers gives accent to the truth of the notion that we continually strive for the unknown when he says

"The unity of all encompassing knowledge formerly claimed of philosophy and myth is something unattainable for human knowing. The sciences are basically and eternally unfinished. As inharmonious become a force of attraction, so aimlessness and evil become a goad to the desire to know."<sup>31</sup> The inference is that science raises the questions in a progression according as solutions are received. This is that which is eternally unfinished.

In order to understand better what the pure desire to know is, it might be helpful to ascertain what it is not. It is not insight, though it initiates the process which brings insight; it is not advance in knowledge, though there would be no such advance without it; it is not understanding, though it is necessary before understanding is achieved. It is the tendency toward human knowing, the spirit of wonder.

Father Lonergan explains: "It is not the verbal utterances of questions. It is not the conceptual formulation of questions. It is not any insight or thought. It is not any reflective grasp or judgment. It is the prior and enveloping drive that carries cognitional process from sense and imagination to understanding from understanding <sup>to</sup> judgment, from judgment to the complete context of correct judgments that is called knowledge."<sup>32</sup>

In his section on sensible data Father Lonergan described the pure desire to know as operative in scientific



study as well as in philosophy: "The guiding orientation of the scientist in the orientation of inquiring intelligence, the orientation that of its nature is a pure, detached disinterested, desire simply to know. For there is an intellectual desire, an Eros of the mind. Without it there would be no questioning, no inquiry, no wonder. Without it there would be no real meaning for such phrases as scientific disinterestedness, scientific detachment, scientific impartiality."<sup>33</sup> Father Lonergan uses "Eros of the mind" again when he discusses bias: "Operative within him (the egoist), there is the Eros of the mind, the desire and drive to understand."<sup>34</sup>; when he discusses self affirmation: "We are committed...by the subtle conquest in us of the Eros that would understand"<sup>35</sup>; and again when he discusses human development: "...he cannot put off the Eros of his mind. To inquire and to understand, to reflect and to judge, to deliberate and choose, are as much an exigence of human nature as waking and sleeping, eating and drinking, talking and loving."<sup>36</sup>

For Father Lonergan, Eros is a tendency, a drive, a desire. Martin Buber says Eros is "a choice, a choice made from inclination."<sup>37</sup>

Martin C. D'Arcy in his discussion of Eros and Agape provides us with several versions of the meaning

that may give some clarification of its use by Father Lonergan. One of the first of these is "A have not whose nature it is to be filled with the riches of heaven. Its sense of need is the motive giving a dynamic to its desire."<sup>38</sup> He tells us that Aristotle's Eros is "The driving force of all the world, and the lower is ever striving towards what is higher than itself under the stress of Eros."<sup>39</sup>

Anders Nygren says of it that "Eros is man's way to God."<sup>40</sup> These are basic and much simplified sides of the nature of Eros but may serve to clarify "the Eros of the mind" in so far as in each Eros can be recognized as an acquisitive attribute of man, a longing, a tendency, an intellectual and possessive form of love. It might be said that it is the desire in the desire to know.

That there is pure desire to know is, as was stated not to be doubted, since inquiry is a fact and the pure desire to know is the basis of all inquiry. The pure desire to know is that attribute of man which compels him to seek knowledge, the tendency to learn, the longing for understanding. All these things help to give us a clearer notion of what is meant by the pure desire to know, the Eros of the mind.

There is another factor that must be reiterated, "the desire is prior to understanding and it is compatible with not understanding...for inquiry is a manifestation

of a desire to understand and it occurs before one does understand."<sup>41</sup>

## THE SOURCE OF ALL KNOWLEDGE

The previous chapter dealt with the pure desire to know as defined by Father Bernard Lonergan and adverted to by other philosophers. It was claimed that since it is the spirit of inquiry in man, it is the drive that has been responsible for the changes that have taken place in the world of man. In this chapter a further attempt will be made to demonstrate that the pure desire to know is the source of all knowledge, that changes in the material world depend upon man's asking questions, and his willingness to seek the correct answers.

Many observers fail to realize that the progress of the centuries could only have been made on the basis of a prodigious accumulation of knowledge. It is evident that alterations have taken place in man's ideas as well as in his means of communication, transportation, medicine, --to name a few of the areas which have been subject to radical changes in the past half-century. Many of the concepts upon which man has based his actions have been modified or destroyed.

Science has been both praised and blamed for these transformations. There may be several reasons why

this should be so: the accomplishments of science are clearly discernible and they have a great influence on the daily lives of a majority of men in the western world, if not in the entire world; the scientist has confidence in the rules he makes and in his predictions; he does not hesitate to attempt to attempt to put his ideas to practical use.

The first rules of the scientists were made as the result of insights received when questions were asked and answered. One of the illustrations used by Father Lonergan in his definition of insight is the discovery of the principle of displacement by Archimedes. In this as in other cases, men asked questions, they received answers; sometimes the answers came as unexpectedly as did Archimedes'; sometimes the answer was anticipated, but in all cases questions were asked. Questions added to questions initiated the accumulation of knowledge and as answers were received, new insights called for ever more questions and answers. This is the way of the true scientist. He is not content. He holds his truths tentatively, he knows that new knowledge is always possible, even while he retains his confidence in the rules he has made. The testing he does is the question he asks, or at least a part of the questioning.

With every addition and revision new and further questions suggest themselves. He seeks the answers, he wants to know. If it is charged that the accumulated knowledge is restricted to some one discipline of area, it can still be declared that the pure desire to know is unrestricted; every question opens up another avenue to further knowledge. Without the pure desire to know there would be no inquiry whatever, and if the choice of subject seems limited, or interested, or restricted, man can ask questions about the subject, and could be led into wider and wider knowledge of it. "But to ask particular questions is to presuppose answers to prior questions. If one drives back the particular questions far enough one catches oneself presupposing the unformed, unstructured 'why' which is at the heart of human intelligence."<sup>2</sup>

Many of the early scientists were also philosophers. They were interested in knowledge as such, in the wonders all about them. It has been said that philosophy differs from the other sciences in that it has no generally agreed upon subject matter. "Philosophy actually deals with the eternal drives of human life." Science is devoted to truth but philosophy is devoted to knowledge itself.

Father Lonergan tells us that when man has nothing to do he may ask questions. The pure desire to know inspires the questions and is prior to any question. It

is the human spirit of inquiry and does not specify that the knowledge it seeks be of any particular kind or use. The asking of questions begins as soon as man becomes aware of himself and of his environment. "Man can question anything and seek methods for answering any question--or showing that it cannot be answered. The condition of the possibility of any and all questions is an awareness...What is the awareness of?...the question-able is unrestricted; to propose a limit of questioning is to raise the question of the legitimacy of asking questions beyond the limit; and raising this question is already beyond the limit."<sup>3</sup>

Father Lonergan also contends that the drive to understand constitutes the primordial 'Why'. "The primordial drive is the pure question. It is prior to any insights, any concepts, any words; for insights, concepts, words have to do with answers and before we look for answers we want them; such wanting is the pure question."<sup>4</sup> "Because this radical 'why' is unstructured, critical intelligence can inspect and revise its own procedures, questioning its own methods of inquiry... The pure, unstructured unlimited drive to understand is the self-authenticating root of human cognition."<sup>5</sup> This same philosopher also says "...it criticizes and revises itself so as to respect and adapt itself to those things it questions; it is supple and free."<sup>6</sup>

There are questions for intelligence and questions for reflection. The questions for intelligence cannot be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. Such questions as 'what', 'why', 'how', 'how often' are questions for intelligence and lead to the grasp and formulation of data in all its forms. The questions for reflection can be answered by a 'yes' or a 'no', and lead to judgments. Every answer to a question for intelligence raises a question for reflection.

According to Father Lonergan's thesis the questions for reflection and those for intelligence are always coupled. He says "Generally, the enunciation of every law can be followed by the question for reflection that asks whether the law is verified, and the definition of every term can be followed by the question for reflection whether the defined exists or occurs. Inversely, when one asserts verification or existence or occurrence, one may be asked what is verified, what exists, what occurs. These questions for intelligence and questions for reflection are concomitant and complementary."<sup>7</sup>

This complementarity is evidence of the pure desire to know in that when we ask the one question, the complementary one is asked only when we have received an answer. If we give free rein to the pure desire, we want to understand correctly and will continue questioning towards



that goal. With each answer, something is added to our knowledge, if only that we must ask more questions in order to reach understanding. It is the opinion of some thinkers that knowledge brings power and that part of that power is the ability to question, part of it is the awareness of things which direct his questioning. One writer states "The significance of man is that he is that part of the universe that asks the question 'What is the significance of man?' He alone can stand apart, and regarding himself and the universe in their eternal aspects, proclaims a judgment. The significance of man is that he is insignificant and aware of it."<sup>8</sup>

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin agrees that man is aware: "Man not only knows, he knows that he knows."<sup>9</sup> He disagrees that man is insignificant and he does not consider any awareness of insignificance. He claims that there are three characteristics unique in man and one of these is "The higher degree of psychic development which places man head and shoulders above all conscious things known to us."<sup>10</sup> He further explains that psychic development, thought and reflection, is manifested in the growing number and kind of question. At the level of thought a question could be asked about the nature of things; from reflection on it is enriched by new possibilities.

When we become aware we ask questions. Michael Novak considers that awareness is "The condition of the possibility of questions and we become aware of the pure unlimited drive to know through the mediation of reflection. It is presupposed in the asking of particular questions, and in the ability to criticize, to revise and to shift our line of inquiry."<sup>11</sup> Here we note the corrective function of the pure desire to know; corrective in so far as the desire to know continues to prompt further and further questions.

In the same article Michael Novak cites Sydney Hook as the philosopher who declares that there can be no doubt about inquiry; "To doubt questioning is to ask whether questions occur. The condition of the possibility of doubting is the occurrence of asking questions."<sup>12</sup> Sydney Hook may be among the philosophers who take the pure desire to know for granted, but he does assume that questions are asked and that the answers furnish knowledge.

Father Lonergan begins his theory of the cognitional process with the fact of questioning. Michael Novak explains how the question can be the starting point, the source of knowledge, the goal of philosophy. "Presuppositionless metaphysics begins from a questioning; not from the appearance of it, nor from the concept of it nor from judgments about it but from the performance.

But questioning has two sides, an objective pole and a subjective pole. Lonergan supplies a metaphor, horizon, to express how these two poles operate together ...The subjective pole is the questioner, more precisely it is his pure, unrestricted desire to know. The objective pole is all that can be questioned. As the subjective pole is unlimited, since man can ask questions about anything, so is the objective pole unlimited. As the subjective pole is one so is the objective pole one. The subjective pole--the unrestricted desire--is a principle of possible achievement. In actual history enlargements of man's horizons occur as the subjective pole sweeps more freely into the realm of the objective pole. The primordial unrestrictedness of the subjective pole defines the ultimate horizon that is to be reached only through the successive enlargements of the actual horizon."<sup>13</sup>

In an article lauding the efforts and accomplishments of unscientific thinkers, John Wharton, publisher - lawyer - businessman, discussed the contributions made to world knowledge by artists, poets and musicians. As an illustration he used a painting by Gauguin. "The one which he entitled 'Whence Came We, What are We, Whither Go We'. Both the painting and the title struck me as

masterpieces. For you cannot answer these questions without starting a whole new train of other profound questions: Is life meaningless or purposeful, or something in between; is there a God; is there a soul; is the soul immortal; is there a goal toward which our actions should be directed. Gaugin's searching-eyed women brought home sharply the fact that for six thousand years men and women have been asking these questions."<sup>14</sup>

It can, at least be inferred that this author recognizes the spirit of inquiry in man, and accepts the fact of the pure desire to know as a real driving force in man's accumulation of knowledge. As if to strengthen the premise that the pure desire to know is the source of knowledge, the title of the article is "Does Anyone Know Reality?"

Another commentator who considers art and music as important facets in man's search for knowledge is a philosopher, Justus Lawlor, whose exposition is entitled "The Poem as Question". He says: "man is a creature bounded by the 'known unknown'...Man dwells at once in a world of in-tension and ex-tension and he is therefore a 'tension' compelled by his very condition to drive ever forward towards a fuller and fuller knowledge. But it is a knowledge which in the natural order can never

resolve the paradox, can never fully ease the strain of his polar position, can never fully liberate him into the world of perfect knowing. As a finite intelligence man can naturally know the infinite only by analogy, by paradox; but this is for him a kind of knowledge intrinsically unsatisfactory because it cannot assuage his passion for the infinite. For this reason man never ceases to question and the very endlessness of the question betrays to him the endlessness of the knowledge he is seeking. The proper definition of man, then, is a dynamism impelled more and more into the unknown. The most authentically human expression of the dynamism is on the intellectual level and it is manifest consciously in the unrestricted and disinterested desire to know."<sup>15</sup> From this explanation we infer that it is the desire to know which establishes man as human; his curiosity is not merely curiosity; his wonder is about everything he sees and everything he imagines.

Insights come in response to questions and these very insights inspire further questions. This has not seemed a frustrating role for man. To many philosophers the restlessness maintained by the pure desire to know seems rather a tendency to further attainment. There is, however, at least one modern thinker who holds the

opinion that the pure desire to know leads to nothing but dissatisfaction and frustration. This is Andrew Reck who says, "Man--endowed with an Eros of the mind is doomed to dissatisfaction in this life. Since men must perforce be content with less than the total truth, so long as they live, they accept as true knowledge that which, despite its incogereces proves useful. And when they are liberated from the incessant round of natural and social needs, they indulge the Eros of the Mind and do philosophy. To judge philosophy by its overt results, moreover is to witness an array of systems in strife, suggesting that the Eros of the Mind, instead of culminating in a single truth, is devoted to no settled conclusion and yields to a plurality of conceptual novelties, each of which in diverse circumstances engages it attention."<sup>16</sup>

The quoted statement gives rise to two interpretations; either its author completely misunderstood what Father Lonergan intended by "Eros of the Mind" or he fails to comprehend that man's restlessness is a fact, no matter what its cause. The pure desire to know is the spirit of inquiry in man; without it there would be no knowledge, no progress, no understanding. Man is not content with less than the truth; he continues to seek it. If the field of his search is limited to one subject, his desire to know is unlimited, and as the objective pole, it is

as unlimited as the subjective pole, the pure desire makes it. There is a vast difference, too, between Father Lonergan's statement that when a man has nothing to do he may ask questions, and Reck's theory that "liberated from the incessant round of natural and social needs...they do philosophy." There is a difference, too, between seeking truth and "culminating in a single truth." Man must seek truth. It was Boethius who said that men's minds will accept falsity if they reject truth: "It is in the nature of men's minds that when they throw away truth, they embrace false ideas, and from these come the cloud of anxiety which obscures their vision of truth."<sup>17</sup>

In the chapter on Metaphysics as Science, Father Lonergan sums up the importance of the pure desire to know in this way: "Man still exists and is still called upon to decide ...The plain fact is that the world lies in pieces before him and pleads to be put together again, to be put together not as it stood before on the careless foundation of assumptions that happened to be unquestioned, but on the strong ground of the possibility of questioning and with full awareness of the range of possible answers."<sup>18</sup>

Several contemporaries of Father Lonergan have given their views on man's spirit of inquiry as it pertains to the knowledge that men gained. One of these writes "Man according to Lonergan, is defined by a drive:

he wants to know and understand the reason for everything. This is the pure desire to know, an utterly illimitable desire, which has raised mankind up and carried him forward from his remotest origins, and which explain the marvellous progress of civilization in man's efforts to conquer and control the forces of nature. This intellectual dynamism unfolds in three phases: (1) posing the problem, What is this? Why is it so? (2) the answer comes through the act of understanding, the insight, (3) reflection upon the insight for the purpose of judging its validity; this is verification of judgment."<sup>19</sup>

The point to be noted in this passage is that the first phase in the process of cognition is that of questioning. A later paragraph in the same dissertation says: "In its ceaseless effort to understand more and more, the human intellect rises naturally to higher and higher viewpoints. It tries to synthesize partial or limited explanation in a more inclusive act of understanding... The mind makes use of richer and richer heuristic notions, notions that are more and more 'pregnant' because able to explain more and more facts."<sup>20</sup>

The higher viewpoints are reached as insights are received, opening up new areas for questioning. "Single insights may occur either in isolation or in related fields. In the latter case, they combine, cluster,



coalesce into the mastery of a subject; they ground sets of definitions, postulates, deductions; they admit applications to enormous ranges of instances. But the matter does not end there. Still further insights arise...New definitions and postulates are devised. A new and larger field of deductions is set up...Such may be referred to very briefly as the emergence of higher viewpoints."<sup>21</sup> Questions, then move toward insights, the insights open up wider fields for questions whose insights continue to move outward and upward. One philosopher describes this upward, outward movement as "...somewhat like a man climbing a spiral staircase. The soul of this progress is the quest for understanding; intelligence labours to understand itself in its own act. The quest does not impose itself with any necessity; there is always the possibility of escape, self-consciousness can always hide from itself."<sup>22</sup> The pure desire to know is manifested in questions; the answers constitute man's knowledge, the accumulated knowledge of the universe.

## EXPERIENCES AND IMAGES AS DATA

Man does not wonder merely for the sake of wondering. The pure desire to know is prior to all concepts, all words, all questions, all formulations of questions; but the formations, questions, words, concepts, must be about something. They must be about the concretely given or imagined. The intellect, which begins empty, acquires intelligible forms in response to the pure desire to know. Since whatever is in the intellect is there through the senses, the intellect has need of the senses. The concrete things which surround man are the things about which he asks questions. His senses perceive, and though the desire to know is prior to his questions, whatever he perceives directs the questions he asks.

"Image is necessary to insight"<sup>1</sup>; Father Lonergan tells us. This necessary image is a presentation of sense on imagination or memory. Through abstraction man grasps the intelligibility, but before he can grasp it he must want to do so; he must want to know. The desire to know and understand prompts the formulation of the question which is relevant to the data presented by the senses. If image is eliminated, the necessity for questions is thereby eliminated also. On this point, the

view of Father Lonergan is: "Just as insight is into the concretely given or imagined, so the pure question is about the concretely given or imagined."<sup>2</sup>

One philosopher explains the manner in which sensible data is employed by the intellect. Father Edward McKinnon says: "First the insight grasps the intelligible form of data and expresses it in an hypothesis or probably empirical generalization. Secondly, this generalization serves as the presupposition for further questions and thus functions as provisionally analytic principle."<sup>3</sup> The first question will be directed by the first objects presented by his senses, his own body, his immediate environment; thereafter the questions may be directed by any and all of these things as well as the insights he has gained from the first questions concerning them. It must not be inferred that the intellect will have no further interest in other sensible data of the universe. Man will continue to wonder about the world that he perceives, and as that world is constantly changing, he will always have questions to ask. "Men do ask questions. Ultimately this asking of questions springs from the active, restless demands of critical intelligence. In action this intelligence develops, criticizes, and authenticates methods which can meet its own standards. The choice of critical intelligence as the starting-place

of philosophy is indeed rational and self-authenticating."<sup>4</sup> Man can and may ask questions about his everyday life, about his everyday world, and also about the images he has formed previously. He may use all of these data to direct further questions which will bring insights to instigate further questioning.

"Man is a being that lives in the world--still he never becomes a part of this world--he remains forever a subject intending an object. Even his body participates in this subjectivity."<sup>5</sup> The first data for man may be his own body or it may be the situation in which it finds itself. The fact that the pure desire to know is prior to questions does not alter the fact that the questions asked, both for intelligence and for reflection are underpinned by man's senses. If he is aware of nothing but his own body he will ask questions about it. Louis Dupre says "The first and perhaps most important thing which strikes man's reflective mind is the fact, that, unlike other animals, he is able to place himself at a distance and to look at the world as if he did not belong to it. This is not to say that man immediately turns to himself. No, first he merely contemplates himself, with astonishment, as an object of wonder among many other objects."<sup>6</sup> Man is, and as was observed earlier, remains a subject, but "All the knowledge of the physical world is knowledge achieved by a human subject, and this subjective element

enters into the essence of the knowledge itself; nothing is purely objective--a physical fact is objective only for a human object."<sup>7</sup>

Man as subject contemplated himself with wonder. Dupre says that this is the beginning of man's self discovery and from self knowledge he may go on to knowledge of the other things which he contemplates. Father Lonergan says of man's subjectivity that it is one pole on the horizon of human cognition. It is unlimited, because it is the desire to know. Louis Dupre agrees with this conclusion but phrases it in these words: "Man's idea of himself develops in the dialectic of spontaneous experience...Every new experience provides food for new reflection."<sup>8</sup>

The importance of sense data and experience are adverted to by Etienne Gilson when he states, "An intelligent being, man finds himself in a universe which he naturally desires to know and of which the structure is such that by investigating it on the basis of sense experience, the human reason finds itself conducted through a series of ordered causes up to a supreme cause, which we call God. In the last analysis, the reason metaphysical knowledge is almost totally ordered to the cognition of God is that in fact, the end of nature is to make God knowable to man and the end of man is to know Him, through knowing nature."<sup>9</sup>

Though the intellect is informed by the senses and man's questions are directed by the data of his senses and his experiences, "The decisive role of sensibility in knowledge cannot eliminate the essential dynamism of human intelligence. Moreover, it is inconceivable that man could reach a point of intellectual saturation where the fertile 'why' and 'what' would cease to sound from the soul of man. As long as the light of the intellect continues to shine in darkness, man will continue to seek the light."<sup>10</sup> The pure desire to know may be prior to all acts of cognition, but it is the intellect which first understands.

Pope Paul VI shows a recognition of man's wonder about sensible things of the universe when he says: "Though mankind is struck with wonder at its own discoveries and its powers, it often raises questions about the current trend of the world, about the meaning of its individual and collective strivings and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity."<sup>11</sup> Even without this specific pronouncement we are aware of the Holy Father's concern for man in the world. He is concerned that the things of the world, those things that man senses and experiences, the things through which his questions are answered should not keep man from God, but should rather bring him to a closer union with Him. In another message to the faithful

Pope Paul declares:

Today the human race is involved in a new phase of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people.<sup>12</sup>

In each of these utterances there is evidence that both experience and man's own nature play important parts in his cognitional processes. That the Holy Father concurs with the view of man as a being who is influenced by his environment, but is superior to it is demonstrated in this passage:

Man judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe, for he shares in the light of the divine mind. By relentlessly employing his talents through the ages he has made progress in the practical sciences, technology, and the liberal arts. In our time he has won superlative victories, especially in his probing of the material world and in subjecting it to himself. Still he has always searched for more penetrating truths, and finds them. For his intelligence is not confined to observable facts only, it can with real certainty attain to intelligible reality...<sup>13</sup>

The search for more penetrating truths is the pure desire to know, and it is through the pure desire that he has surpassed the material universe. The notion that the material universe is a factor in man's accumulation of

knowledge is included in the declaration that he has proved it and subjected it to himself. His senses and his experiences were put to use by his intellect.

All man's knowledge comes to him through his senses, but Father Lonergan declares that sense knowledge is not all that man wants to know. He states:

...Without the prior presentation of sense, there is nothing for man to understand, and when there is nothing to be understood, there is no understanding. Moreover, the combination of the operations of sense and understanding does not suffice for human knowing. To omit judgement is quite literally silly; it is only by judgement that there emerges a distinction between fact and fiction, logic and sophistry, philosophy and myth, history and legend, astronomy and astrology, chemistry and alchemy.<sup>14</sup>

For a further explanation of human knowing with regard to experience, and other data as well, Father Lonergan has this to say:

Experience stimulates inquiry and inquiry is intelligence bringing itself into act; it leads from experience through imagination to insight and from insight to the concepts that combine in single objects both what has been grasped by insights and what inexperience or imagination is relevant to the insight. In turn, concepts stimulate reflection, and reflection is the conscious exigence of rationality; it marshals the evidence and weighs it either to judge or else to doubt, and so renew inquiry.<sup>15</sup>

However, Father Lonergan also says: "No one can place human knowing in judging to the exclusion of experience



and understanding. To pass judgment on what one does not understand is not human knowing, but human arrogance."<sup>16</sup>

In further discussion on sensible data Father Lonergan tells us that "the datum of sense may be defined as the content of an act of seeing, touching, tasting, smelling. But the difficulty with that definition is that such contents do not occur in a cognitional vacuum. They emerge within a context that is determined by interests and pre-occupations."<sup>17</sup> There is no limit to the questions one may ask, and each insight will present further images which will become further data. However, it must not be assumed that experience provides material for practical knowledge only. All knowledge comes to the intellect through the senses. It would be a mistake also, to give sensory or practical knowledge an inferior position.

Cardinal Newman proclaimed the love of knowledge for its own sake, but did not underrate the value of practical knowledge. The practical concrete world directs our pure desire to know. Henry Hiz in a recent article says "the human being has an intimate tendency to understand himself through that to which he is in a constant and essential relation, through the world."<sup>18</sup>

Paul Oskar Kristeller, in the *Journal of Philosophy*, adverts to the data of experience and sense when he says:  
" Knowledge can be classified according to what questions it answers. Such a classification will give overlapping

classes of sentences...according to the generality of the questions."<sup>19</sup> The kinds of questions we ask are as varied as the things we perceive.

There is a higher viewpoint to be achieved whether our knowledge is of the concrete world, of our memory or of our imagination. Peter A. Carmichael expresses it:

Aesthetically, a visionary state is not superior to a sensory one. Probably it is far below the unmaddened vision of familiar objects in respect of purity, or clearness. Aesthetic perception is probably of particulars only, of course including moods and humours; in which case the idea that a poet, a composer, or other artist cons 'the universal' truth, reality, everything, is categorically mistaken. He may compose very moving works in his visions and sentiments concerning such subjects, but that is quite different from cognizing the subjects.

His world is his experience. His distinctive knowledge is a true construction which he, far above other men, is gifted to produce, one radiant with the light of his genius and the purity of his motives. Knowing himself is hardly distinguishable from fulfilling and expressing himself.<sup>20</sup>

The pure desire to know requires a conscious effort to keep it operative is the opinion of Michael Novak who says:

The pure unlimited drive to understand is a fact, and also an achievement. It is a fact, but it is not always operative. It is, when functioning, immediately given. But we become aware of it through the mediation of reflection. It is presupposed in the asking of particular

questions, and in the ability to criticize, to revise and to shift our line of inquiry.<sup>21</sup>

The asking of particular questions is dictated or prompted by particular data. If the questioner is to maintain the pure desire to know as pure and unrestricted he will revise, and shift his line of inquiry, not heedlessly, but in order to reach a correct understanding.

The pure desire to know may not be the entire reason for man's progress; much of the material comfort enjoyed could well have been the result of interested, concerned desire for particular goals, but man has won 'superlative victories' in response to the pure desire to know. To reiterate a previous statement; without the pure desire to know there would be no inquiry, and without inquiry there would be no knowledge or progress. The pure desire may not be constantly operative, and the interest or concern of the researcher can stimulate progress in different fields; it is a fact that the first questions were asked in response to the pure desire to know, the human drive to understand. The insights received to the first questions whether they were correct or incorrect, were the data for the succeeding questions.

Concerning the validity of experience and data in the process of human cognition, Father William Stewart, S.J., says:

In the effort to understand we marshal all the forces at our command. Under the direction of active intelligence we work out the data, we call on memory and imagination, we summon up the relevant images...But until the solution occurs the problem remains a puzzle. The reasoning process continues.<sup>22</sup>

If we allow the pure desire to know to dominate our reasoning process, if the questions we ask are for understanding, we shall move forward and upward acquiring the higher viewpoints that are the goal of the spirit of wonder in us.

## DETACHMENT AND DISINTEREST VERSUS BIAS, INTERFERENCE

The pure desire to know is the inquiring, critical spirit of man. Its object is simply to know and is manifested in the questioning it does. There is no limit to the questions that can be asked, so this desire is unlimited. The questions can be about anything perceived; they can be for intelligence or for reflection, so the desire is unrestricted. This desire is so unlimited, so unrestricted that its very first manifestation, the questions of children, has become synonymous with insatiable curiosity. Father Lonergan says: "The child would understand everything at once...It does not suspect that there is a strategy of insights, that the answers to many questions depend on answers to still other questions."<sup>1</sup> There is common to all man the very spirit of inquiry that constitutes the scientific attitude. But in its native state it is untutored. Here we have the inference that the scientific method of inquiry is the way to maintain the purity of the desire to know.

Father Lonergan does more than infer that the scientific method should be used in any search for knowledge. He tells us that it is through the scientific method of asking, testing, revising, correcting insights, that we attain the higher viewpoints. These higher

viewpoints come as we understand correctly the successive answers to successive questions. Father Lonergan declares that without the pure desire to know there would be no meaning to such phrases as scientific detachment, the disinterestedness of the scientific method or the impartiality.

In using the scientific method, we put aside the hopes and fears as well as the desires of everyday life and in their place we accept the detached, disinterested, needs of inquiring intelligence. The scientific observer is seeking knowledge, not answers to any particular problem. This kind of inquiry takes positive effort and rigorous training. This view is upheld by Father Frederick E. Crowe: "It is the minority that questions, thinks, understands, decides, and takes the lead; the majority are taught, persuaded, and led."<sup>2</sup> At first glance it may seem that this is a denial of the pure desire to know, but when we consider that the purity of the desire must be maintained at the cost of considerable sacrifice and effort it will be clear that there is truth in the statement.

The scientific observer needs and uses the data of sense, of experience, and of memory. These data direct his questions, but his pure desire to know keeps them from being mere sensations; the scientific observer

is not content with mere sensitive flow of consciousness. He wants to understand. The pure desire to know may move all men to ask the first questions, but the trained observer, true to the pure desire keeps asking the questions which correct and revise his knowledge. He wants the correct answers. The purity of his desire goads him onward and upward to the ever higher viewpoints which are superior to a mere jumble of unrelated answers to disorganized questions.

The first questions man asks are asked about the concrete familiar objects surrounding him, but he does not live in a vacuum. Some of these questions have been answered for other men, and these are answered before he can formulate them. He learns from his parents, his teachers, his peers. There is a store of answers and insights accumulated over a long period of time. It is here that there must be conscious effort to guard the purity of the desire to know. It is here that the hopes and fears as well as other desires begin to place limitations or restrictions on his desire. According to Father Lonergan, the 'common sense' of the community is a restriction on the pure desire to know because it remains in the world of familiar things. It can keep man from asking further questions not concerned with the here and now. The pure desire to know asks questions directed by the images of its environment, but it does

not seek answers that would make an immediate or palpable difference. It simply wants to know.

Common sense, on the other hand, rejects any answers not concerned with the matter at hand; it does seek the answers that would make a difference. Man's other desires may oppose his pure desire to know in this area of common sense. To ask the further questions might in some way prevent the fulfillment of other desires. Unless man can learn to give priority to the pure desire to know his other desires may and often do act as a restriction on it.

The pure desire to know is the intelligent and rational basis from which we discern between correct and incorrect answers; it is also the intelligent and rational basis from which we discern between valid and mistaken questions. That we do not inquire merely for the sake of questioning is adverted to in these words from Michael Novak's article: "It would be a mistake to glorify the process of inquiry at the expense of the acquired and verified achievements of inquiry, however tentative or incomplete. It is by means of gradual enlargements of our present horizons that we proceed toward the ultimate horizon, towards which whether we like it or not, the Eros of understanding propels us. Our progress is by means of a rhythm of restlessness and rest and both moments are to be respected."<sup>3</sup> Not only does the pure desire to know



function for the sake of understanding, but we again realize that the pure desire to know is not always operative. It does rest. Another point of interest in the quotation is that the achievements of inquiry are verified. It is the pure desire to know that calls for verification; this verification will require a conscious effort of the knower, for it is verification that may be opposed by hopes and fears, concomitant with common sense.

The answers accepted by common sense may be practical solutions to immediate problems. They may seem to bring about improvements, but if the desire remains restricted, if hopes and fears are permitted to dominate there will be decline instead of progress. There is an abundance of evidence that it is most often common sense that provides solutions to problems; but it might also be true that some of the answers so achieved may have stimulated the pure desire to know by providing the insights whose data lead to further questions. The pure desire need not be extinct because it is restricted, or because it is not always operative.

Teilhard de Chardin is one who believes that man's desire for practical problems has contributed to progress. He says: "Since its birth, knowledge has made its greatest advance when stimulated by some particular problem of life needing a solution; and its most sublime theories would have drifted rootless on the flood of

human thought if they had not been promptly incorporated in to some way of mastering the world."<sup>4</sup> Man's pure desire to know may not be operative at all times, but if it operates at all, the concern or interest of other desires can contribute to progress. If concern is not constantly dominant, it may be of assistance to the pure desire to know. Man's hopes, fears, interests, concerns may have contributed to his skill, to advances in technology, and in the acquisition of everyday comforts. Although it is not a correct judgment to say that man does philosophy only after he has completely satisfied all his animal needs, it may still be true that the scientific observer can maintain the purity of his desire to know if he does not have to concern himself with the acquisition of creature comforts.

Father Lonergan says it is highly practical to do the intelligent thing. The pure desire to know is most practical as insight is the source of practical applications of theoretical knowledge, the real key to practicality is insight in to both insight and oversight. These two are frequently found together. Insights grasps what is pertinent, oversight is a flight from understanding. Insight is an aid to progress, oversight induces decline. Father Lonergan says: "We reinforce our love of truth with a practicality that is equivalent to obscurantism..."

We are not pure...We compromise...But the very advance of knowledge brings a power over nature and man too vast and terrifying to be entrusted to the good intentions of unconsciously biased minds."<sup>5</sup> This opinion may seem to contradict that of Father Teilhard de Chardin, who seems to be saying that progress is the result of concerned desire for a solution, to the exclusion of the pure desire to know. But Father Teilhard confirms what has been said about higher viewpoints and the scientific method, while Father Lonergan says that the biased mind would not use knowledge for the greatest good. We must maintain our pure desire to know by asking the further questions that all insights bring along with them; there will be no decline in the practical use to which the knowledge is put, for it will be used for the greatest possible good.

There is in all man the pure desire to know. It is initially untutored. Man must learn the scientific method of inquiry in order to exploit the pure desire to know to its greatest advantage. In those men whose desire to know has remained untutored, myth has taken the place of metaphysics. Minds untrained in reasoning and with few accumulated insights to guide them, attempted to answer the questions formulated by the pure desire to know. They created a kind of image, a product of imagination. This image was probably endowed with some

of the attributes of the observable data of their environment. Then there were no insights on which to base questions leading to the higher viewpoints. The pure desire to know was restricted by force of circumstance. These early myths were expressed in a kind of symbolic imagery and it can be said that the myth itself was a symbol of man's desire to know--when no answers are available, he creates answers.

The creation of myth is still a practice. Modern myth, which is also a kind of substitute for metaphysics, is a result of a flight from understanding. Oversight could be one basis for modern myth, but more often is due to a refusal of insight to know the myth. Such insights are available, but the intellect refuses to accept them.

There is another aspect of myth which Father Lonergan discusses. It is the allegorical aspect. He says: "For a problem of expression arises in as much as the myth-maker is endeavouring to transcend the counterpositions, in as much as he is trying to turn attention from the sensible to the intelligible, in as much as he has reached a viewpoint that current modes of expression cannot convey. We have described myth as an untutored effort of the desire to know, to grasp, and formulate the nature of things. In the measure that such an

effort tries to free itself from its fetters, myth attains an allegorical significance."<sup>6</sup>

Probably the two best known restrictions on the pure desire to know are bias and prejudice. Father Lonergan describes various kinds of bias, but says that each has as its basis an incomplete development of intelligence. Bias not only blocks the pure desire to know, it resists any effort to overcome it by further questioning. It closes its eyes to any insights which could cause it to revise its viewpoints.

Individual bias is egoism, an interference of spontaneity with the development of intelligence. The egoist is shrewd, calculating, self-seeking. He does not let other desires interfere with his solutions of his own problems. He refuses to put the further questions that would modify his solution and brushes intelligence aside.

Group bias is interference with the development of practical common sense. Group bias refuses to put the further questions that would reveal its well-being as excessive or its usefulness as ended. Group bias gives priority to the interests of the group, and to the alterations of compromise.

General bias is that which causes intellectual development to lag behind the full development of the

animality of human beings. Specialization which refuses to recognize the significance of other fields is another aspect of general bias. In all its aspects it disregards the larger issues and long term results. Father Lonergan says: "The general bias of common sense involves sins of refusal as well as mere omissions. Its complacent practicality easily twists to the view that, as insistent desires and contracting fears necessitate and justify the realization of ideas, so ideas without that warrant are a matter of indifference."<sup>7</sup> The consequences of this are first, a deterioration of the social situation from which power to suggest new ideas is lost. The second result is the development of a disregard for the detached and disinterested spirit of inquiry. Intelligence that is not conformed to the objective situation becomes irrelevant, it surrenders first on the level of common sense and then on the level of intellectual detachment. The pure desire to know may return to myth to satisfy the spirit of wonder in man.

Father Lonergan suggests that to counteract this man must learn to use the scientific method in acquiring knowledge. He must answer the further questions which bring the higher viewpoints. He must maintain and guard the pure desire to know. Michael Novak tells us:

"Lonergan's entire effort is directed against the many flights from understanding to which he and we are prey... We sometimes misunderstand our own capacities, and this infidelity to ourselves shows up sooner or later in our ability to do all that we might do -- and, usually, have given signs of hoping to do... But there is an unlimited, unrestricted, drive to understand, which can adapt itself for particular purposes to any method of inquiry, within any framework and so adapt itself to any horizon."<sup>8</sup>

We have been told that we must strive to guard and maintain the pure desire to know or suffer the consequences. The significance of Father Lonergan's insistence on keeping the pure desire unrestricted, detached and free is that "For Lonergan the notion of being is identical with the pure desire to know."<sup>9</sup> This pure desire to know he now calls the notion of being in the special sense he attaches to the word notion, since for him the human mind by its very structure anticipates in a vague way what it is going to know. Already, from the very outset, it has a general notion of what it is -- a notion of being.

## CONCLUSION

The fact of man's inquiring nature has always been evident, and philosophers who have studied the processes of human cognition have recognized the spirit of wonder. Many, like Cardinal Newman extolled the virtues of learning for its own sake. Father Lonergan does not equate the pure desire to know with the idea of knowledge as its own reward. The pure desire to know seeks no reward, it seeks to know and Father Lonergan says that it is the most practical of all desires in the fact that it desires to know and understand everything. It is flexible, self-revising, self-correcting, unrestricted and can adapt itself to any situation it questions. It does not decry practical solutions, but it rises from them to even higher insights. Sydney Hook concurs with this conviction when he says: "For philosophy is a vision of possibilities, based on actualities and not determined by them."<sup>1</sup>

It is through the dynamism of the pure desire to know that higher viewpoints are reached. The pure desire attains these higher viewpoints by means of the scientific method, which systematically organizes, verifies,



and unifies the insights received. However, it is to be noted that it is not only through the scientific method that the pure desire to know operates. Being unrestricted, detached, unlimited, supple and free, the pure desire to know can adopt any method.

The systematic achievements of higher viewpoints by the pure desire to know is the goal of the heuristic structure. "At the upper limit will be a supreme heuristic notion; this is Lonergan's notion of being, the global anticipation of all there is to know and all that will be known...The human understanding desires to know everything and consequently the heuristic notion, which is behind its entire search is itself an anticipation of everything, and this is what the notion of being means."<sup>2</sup>

The pure desire to know is the spirit of wonder in man. It is the human orientation towards truth. It goads man on to ask questions about everything he perceives, to verify the insights received, to revise, to correct and to authenticate all answers. It is the way to higher and higher viewpoints which are the signposts of progress. The pure desire to know is not always operative. It can be blocked and often is, and the blocking is according to Father Lonergan 'the principle of decline'. For the sake of human progress, man must make a conscious effort to guard, and maintain the pure unlimited, unrestricted, free desire to know.

## FOOTNOTES

### Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning (New York: The Colonial Press, 1900), p. 476.

### Chapter II

<sup>1</sup>Bernard J.F. Lonergan, Insight (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>F.J. Thonnard, A Short History of Philosophy (Paris: Des Clees & Cie, 1956), p. 41

<sup>3</sup>Renford Bambrough, The Philosophy of Aristotle (New York, 1963), p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>6</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, On the Truth of The Catholic Faith, James F. Anderson (New York: Image Books, 1956), p. 176.

<sup>7</sup>Nikolai Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom (London: The Centenary Press, 1954), p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>Carl G. Jung, The Undiscovered Self (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1957), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>John Dewey, Philosophy of Education (Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1958), p. 170.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>John Henry Cardinal Newman, The Idea of A University (New York: Image Books, 1959), p. 131.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Bernard J.F. Lonergan, p. 348.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

- 15 Ibid., p. xi.
- 16 Ibid., p. 6.
- 17 Ibid., p. 348.
- 18 Ibid., p. 349.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid., p. 350.
- 21 Ibid., p. 636.
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