

CONTEMPLATION IN A WORLD OF VIOLENCE II

A PAPER GIVEN TO THE THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY
AT DOWNSIDE ABBEY, NOVEMBER 2001

I WANT TO START with a distinction, reached by my teacher Bernard Lonergan, for it sums up his whole genial approach to the unfolding of our self-awareness, our way of being in the world, and it has proved invaluable for me in getting my thoughts together on our subject. The distinction is based on what for him was a certainty, although it is denied by the conventional wisdom: that I can know my own mind, not just in the colloquial sense of that phrase but literally, that I can be, in relation to its processes as I try to be in the real, an observer, a witness. I can sit loose to what goes on in my mind and, if I practise focusing, in my body, and observe what is going on there: what I *then* know is every bit as real as the piece of wreckage discovered on the beach. Our feelings *about* the world around us are as real as the world around us when studied not introspectively.

To make this equality-in-realness clear, Lonergan called the encountered world, in all its vast variety, "the data of sense." And he called our thoughts and feelings as observed, as sat loose to, "the data of consciousness." Data, what is the given, is the starting-point for all enquiry. So the most radical way of indicating the much more broadly based approach that he was making was to say that we have to deal with two sets of data, two sorts of given: not two realities, emphatically no, but two ways to get real. Let me quote him here.

Data include data of sense and data of consciousness. Data of sense include colours, shapes, sounds, odours, tastes, the hard and the soft, rough and smooth, hot and cold, wet and dry, and so forth.... On the other hand data of consciousness consist of *acts* of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, judging and so forth.'

Insight, p. 274 (emphasis mine)

Lonergan's imagined reader was the scientist. As he matured, it became the non-professional. But he realised that it is the overwhelming influence of science on our culture that shapes our mind: so if he could convince the science-shaped mind, the Richard Dawkins kind of mind, that a poet's response to the Milky Way is as real as the scientist's, that would be real progress. I did try this once in a letter to Dawkins, and failed. In a very decent reply, he said he could make nothing of theology! But it is interesting that a few years ago, a large group of academic theologians in the States were invited to a week-long conference, at one of whose sessions they were addressed by a professional scientist who told them bluntly that they cut no ice in the scientific community in so far as he knew it. There's only one name that one hears, he said: Bernard Lonergan. Alone among theologians, he was interested in the tool scientists use to get their results: the mind!

But it's not *the poet's* response to the Milky Way that is Lonergan's concern. It is the

scientist's, attentive to what he is doing and its implications for himself. We live in an age of science. So we are thoroughly used to the fact of scientific discovery. Some new oddity is discovered in the universe, and science kicks in and tries to understand it. Procedures are followed for this purpose. And sometimes *it* happens, and the newspapers wake up, as they do when the pope makes a gaffe. The double helix discloses DNA, the formula of life itself, and a new era is born. Now try thinking of the process that led to this discovery in psychological terms, of the feeling of frustration at not getting it, of the endless kicking around in the world of images, of light and confusion, of the popping of champagne corks at the breakthrough. What's been going on all this time? Desire, insistent, persistent desire: the desire to know, to know at any cost, even of life itself. Then we remember that science as well as the church has its martyrology, the memory of ridicule, and sometimes banishment, suffered by its pioneers. Who—yes, who—is behind this relentless desire? Certainly not the me I'm used to, moody, fearful, sometimes selfish, above all self-reserving. No, a deeper self. Each of us has a self that wants to reach the truth at any cost.

And the clue this self gives of itself is the data of consciousness. Richard Dawkins is a stunning example of intellectual brilliance. Inattentive to the data of consciousness. When he replied to my letter that he could make no sense of theology, I should have replied that I wasn't writing to him about theology. I was talking about where theology comes from, together with literary criticism and a host of other disciplines, about why theology happens: not from superstition—well

not only that!—but from attention to the whole range of being human.

The data of consciousness constitute the opening of intelligence to the desire to know whose final fulfilment is the vision of God. Intelligence not open to these data may reach the proportions of genius, and then what you are liable to get is what Lonergan once referred to as the huge aberrance of genius. The terrain of history is strewn with its millions of victims.

Another example of inattention to the data of consciousness is furnished by what tends to happen to a natural contemplative in a religious community. Our Abbot Chapman is one example. A storm of protest from spiritual experts greeted his *Spiritual Letters*, posthumously published. Another is Augustine Baker, to whom Michael Woodward devoted a conference this year. Baker liked that word 'propensity, the 'door slightly ajar' of Chapman, and he discovered it in Gertrude More and saved her from a lot of grief, no doubt, from her community. Please note, too, the intellectual note struck here. It is something one just knows one has. When Jung was asked "do you believe in God?" he made the famous reply: "No, I know him."

The biggest divide I know between thinkers, and between people talking about prayer and God and all manner of things, is between people who seem to be accepting these two parallel sets of data and those who do not. There are highly intelligent people on both sides of this divide. It has shown itself to me as the astonishing fact that there are many scholars far more versed in Aristotle than I am—I'm not 'versed' in him at all!—who, when they read in him that ideas come through intellectual light falling upon

images, are not immediately and gratefully reminded of their own 'aha!' experiences. According to Geoffrey Price, Catherine Pickstock, an ardent Thomist, has a diagram of Aquinas' Aristotelian theory of knowledge that vies in complexity with the London tube map, and was not interested when my friend suggested that the theory is saying what we experience when we 'catch on.'

To repeat, each of us has a self that desires to know the truth, the whole truth of us, at all costs, and the evidence for the existence of this self is in the data of consciousness. But there are short-cuts, for instance Dame Gertrude's 'propensity', Chapman's 'door just ajar.' Eckhart Tolle was torn through the most devastating short cut in that night of near-suicide whence he awoke into a world manifestive of love, in which it seems he has lived ever since! In his night of transformation, he experienced the cessation of thought while consciousness continued, an event I always record with excitement because it so nearly corresponds to Chapman's 'attention to nothing in particular (which is God of course)'. Thought stopped because he, Tolle, was not thought. He did 'step outside his own skin.' And in the book that, after the proper study, flowed out of the experience, it soon became clear that the thinking mind is not himself (No to *Cogito ergo sum*) but his instrument, requiring all the *askesis* that mind has ever required, and for the more precise reason that it is an instrument and requires fine tuning. I said that Tolle's description 'nearly' corresponds with Chapman's, because Chapman advances on it with his parenthesis "which is God of course." The voluntary cessation of thought is itself no big deal, and Tolle suggests the exercise

of sitting quietly and noting when a thought comes. One is surprised that quite a time can elapse before the first thought. Now for Chapman this identical cessation, or at least designification, of thought is a groping toward nothing in particular. He adds "which is God of course" because the desire behind it is unrestricted. I find myself that this groping is a letting myself into an enclosing presence that is nothing but love, perhaps Merton's "hidden ground of love." It is called wasting time in God. The waste-of-time feel vies with the feel of a direction. The groping for nothing in particular is a groping *into all*, the all that is enclosing love. Remember that when Tolle awoke from that forever loss of self, the billowing curtains in his room seemed to be stirred by love.

The thing to get hold of in Chapman's description is its almost casual combination of the clinical with the mystical. There's no pious twaddle in Chapman, said Evelyn Underhill. We pass imperceptibly from doodling to 'God.' This suggests to me that the passageway from the mind 'sat to' to the all-encompassing mystery we hunger to know is more open than the tradition of mystical theology has supposed. For Chapman, both the Jesuits and the Dominicans made a lot of palaver over this passage which for Chapman was more in the nature of a propensity some people have, many more than we think. The rare spiritual director who knows this and anticipates it in people has saved many person's spiritual lives, not to say their sanity. And, to reiterate, that rare bird is attentive to the data of consciousness. The inattentive are not just the hard-nosed atheists. They include many theologians and spiritual directors.

Now let us try putting together this propensity for "nothing-in-particular" to mean 'God', and Lonergan's concept of the data of consciousness as distinct from the data of sense. My suggestion is that the big divide between two sorts of thinkers occurs over this distinction. The 'can't get outside your own skin' people hive off, while the other lot find themselves strangely familiar with another sort of data, called 'revealed', whether Christian or other. I would attend less to the *flights* of that wonderful thirteenth century Sufi poet Rumi, and more to his *base*, which is what I would call a more interesting way of being human, of sitting to oneself.

With lovely ingenuousness, Lonergan once said in a lecture, "They told me I should pray more. So I did, and I found it easier than I expected." Doesn't that say it all? A recent article in *Theological Studies* (Sept, 2001) has shown how naturally a mystical dimension came into his thought.

I think all these considerations lead to Meister Eckhart. Eckhart read Paul's statement "we have the mind of Christ" and was able to take it at its face value because he 'just knew' himself inwardly. He knew his own mind well enough to understand it as a participation in the divine mind. A recent book on him has called him, in its title, 'the man from whom God hid nothing.' This is a seriously misleading title, in so far as it suggests that God who, for run-of-the-mill believers, gave his word in Jesus, came clean on the whole thing for this privileged soul. No, Eckhart is the man who attended to the revelation of God in Jesus as an awakened person, one, that is, for whom 'God' was the "nothing in particular" of an assiduously practical

doodling. The subtitle should be 'the man who does not hide God from us', the man of the most basic human fact, of sitting loose to oneself and hearing the outlandish word, and having the guts to talk about this. That it took guts is shown by the fact that it has taken the church seven centuries to recognize him as the Master he is. Why did Jaspers, a passionately religious thinker, get nothing from theologians, one of the greatest disappointments of his life? Surely what he had come up against was men (all of them men, surely, at that time) wedded to the data of sense and thus bound to describe the world of revealed truth as another country, unable at any point to offer personal verification of what they described. Why did Aldous Huxley say the same thing, when he described theologians as pursuing what is the ultimate meaning of everything with tools the equivalent for any astronomer of taking a look at the night sky? I still remember my passage from philosophy to theology class, and, later, from the English Tripos with Leavis to Rome, as a plunge from awakening humanity into gobbledegook.

It was always axiomatic that grace builds on nature. There was, it seems, one exception to this rule: there could be no natural propensity of which grace would be the fulfilment—no natural leaning, I mean, toward the divine intimacy that grace confers. The "door slightly ajar in some people" that Chapman refers to was quite unacceptable. This was most peculiar. It meant that the axiom only applied in matters where the direct encounter with God was not involved. A natural tendency to be friendly could be taken up by grace. A natural creativity or artistic ability likewise. But with the one area that grace is all about, the

encounter with God, grace was not allowed to perfect nature. It took over the whole process from the start. There was no place for natural contemplation, for Wordsworth for instance, whom Chapman instances as the natural propensity not supernaturally developed. Any suggestion of this kind was committing the deadly sin of 'confusing the orders of grace and nature.'

That theological world was quite bizarre, and it ended with Vatican II. But it is worth looking at, briefly, as a beautiful specimen of systematic imperviousness, on the part of theology, to the data of consciousness. For what was it that closed 'nature' off from that other world called 'grace'? It was, that we were thinking of 'nature', our nature for heaven's sake, as something looked at not as lived in, not introspectively. That dangerous thing 'desire' was banished from theology—though not from the theologians! An American confrère at Sant' Anselmo in those days once asked me, "Ever been here in the Spring, Seb? Find it hard?"

Closely connected with this strange bias against the data of consciousness is the way the stuff I write is always referred to as 'spiritual theology', a special branch of theology. Imagine the science of zoology as properly concerned with different environments for herbivores and carnivores, with a special branch dealing with animals!

It becomes clearer and clearer that the distinction between the data of sense and the data of consciousness is the 'operator' over a cluster of connected insights. A fundamental ability of the person to sit loose to, and observe, his/her mental activity, grounds an openness to contemplative prayer, and a much more optimistic answer to questions like 'can we really

empathize with each other?' I would hazard the suggestion that it is unlikely that a person who really grasps the Lonergan distinction will have difficulties with Abbot Chapman. I have always found that the two go together. The radical freeing-up of the person through being able to observe and own his/her operations shows itself, not surprisingly, in human relations, and especially in the grounding personal relation of contemplative prayer. The anger aroused by Lonergan is very similar to the anger aroused by contemplative prayer. It is the anger aroused by a certain freedom about a person.

Fascinatingly, it is when we turn to examine anger itself that we shall discover the most fruitful implication of 'sitting loose to myself' in action! This happy condition will turn out to offer resolution at the most intransigent source of violence, anger doomed by society to be lonely. Anger, like mind itself, is shared. I can know yours and you mine.

Marshall Rosenberg is an American psychologist and author of *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion* (Puddledancer Press, www.NonviolentCommunications.com) He writes:

I, and others in my organization, have worked with people from the warring factions in Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, South Africa, Serbia, Croatia, Israel and Palestine. Our experience has taught us that real safety and peace can be achieved, despite enormous odds, only when people are able to see the 'humanity' of those who attack them. This requires something for more difficult than turning the other cheek; it requires empathizing with the fears, hurt, rage and unmet human needs that are behind the attacks.

Now the method here outlined is the implementation, in situations of extreme crisis, of the principle that I am elaborating in this essay, namely that I can show

to another person that I can feel, know from the inside, agree with, make good sense of, his or her feelings, even the ones that we most tend to hide (even from ourselves). This empathy is possible because of the structure of consciousness, namely that I can observe, witness, sit loose to, feeling in me, and out of this inner openness let the other know that I know the feeling in him or her. The moment I sense in someone else the understanding of the real pain I'm in, I experience a big inner change, relief, body-shift. Here is a practical example furnished by people who practise Focusing, a way of letting our gut feeling speak, discovered by an American therapist, Eugene Gendlin (His little book *Focusing* is a must).

A little boy got his thumb caught in the car door as someone slammed it, and was bawling with pain. His mother was not there—she was out shopping. People tried to soothe the kid with "Mummy will be back soon, etc." All to no avail, but rather making things worse. Then one woman, a visitor, says to the child "you really are mad at Mummy for not being here, she *should* be here etc." Immediately the child quieted down, and soon he was choosing the colour of the dressing to go on the sore thumb.

My feeling of myself recognised by someone else is an immediate incentive to be more alive and adventurous. Currently I am with the best therapist I have ever had. She has a way of overhearing things I am saying to myself that I don't hear myself, although I say them aloud. Some of the things I say I don't attend to, and she does. There is nothing arcane about this, as though there were this deep mystery at the centre of me only to be touched in some mystical way.

(There is of course, but putting our mystery in the wrong place is one of the errors to which spirituality is prone.) Rosenberg learned to hear a frightened soul in a murderous shout, and to let the shouting one know he heard it. The therapeutic cliché "what I hear you saying is..." gets it—that's why it has become a cliché. I wish I could do this for someone I know, about whom someone else said "he must have been terribly hurt!" To hear the soul in the murderous shout is an extreme form of the skill that my therapist exercises.

The dynamics of that incident with the hurt thumb are a precious datum for peace studies. And they owe their efficacy to the human fact that we can sit loose to all that goes on inside us. But let me move now from the hurt child to the recalcitrant areas of our hurt and vengefulness. Before I move into this explosive area, let me take a break, into a bit of free verse or, as Americans prefer to call it, shredded prose.

In my beginning, says Eliot
not in the beginning, in my beginning,
what does this mean this morning as I lie
thought paralyzed, and most willingly so
except my will all inarticulate
knows no relief but breathing, willed now deeper
and time is passing on the verge of prayer.
This state is solitary but for love
and willed forgetting of all injuries,
Chapman called it an idiotic state.

Nothing is less me than who never was not
that without warning suddenly is Jesus.
Who do I want to read this? When I'm asked
I am abashed, for there was a moment
I only wanted, known, to be all loving,
all knowing being for the other life
when death has cashed the check of our surrender.
Now only undared happy absolute

but having to be inarticulate
and when I ask it just how does this feel
all it can say is good, this is the good,
the only anxiety is: do I love,
even this question, though, is self-regarding
and breathing is the only language now
fishing for memories to be restored
out of the moving sea of endless time.
The only difference between time and time
of this self-presence is, sometimes I float,
at other times am grounded as this morning
unable not unwilling to make words
then suddenly it bursts on me and Eliot:

In the Beginning was the Word:
John too felt the fascination of this
found himself making the Beginning and the Word
two substantives, Beginning bosoming
its lovely Word, a Father's bosom, patriarchy
lost without trace in Arche, images
vanishing into ecstasy and prayer,
In the Beginning was the Word
as though the Beginning were a house
the Word its heir, Prince William of her eyes
and a whole chain-reaction of my lusting:
In the Beginning was the Word:
We always thought hypostatizing here
was quaint and cumbersome, a saucy use
of common language at its most mechanic:
not so: this in-ness is the in of all,
it is how the Word is able to be sighed
in high sex ecstasy in middle garden
and sex, the most exciting, becomes 'in'
and I remember as we worked together
in play and for a fee, the self-same breast
with a word of hers casually spoken
connected with my place between the legs
making a third in active ordination,
chest, belly, sex, my mirror trinity
of orchestrated life in the Beginning
wherein the Word is born eternally
not in theology's laboratory

but in my soul as my waking alive
and putting on the light that shows I have
plenty of time for this before the bell.
And yet the take-off is simplicity
itself: to understand as no one does
in today's time drowned in our mental noise:
with nose we smell, with sight we see, with tongue
we taste and talk and may engage in sex,
with ear we hear and hardly ever listen:
we do not think, though, likewise, with the brain
whose action joins us to a higher power
whose word in the beginning is our own,
the carapace of our theology
making off-limits what delimits us
and saves our church from mediocrity
pursuing sex because it cannot know it
the only way there is, the Bible's way
or that of monks provided we not cheat
but find the ecstasy in lectio.

Not surprisingly, anger, of all the passions
classified by Greek philosophy, has no
opposite. It just has to stop! Is there
anything to stop it, other than exhaus-
tion, which of course is only a breather
before a fresh onslaught.

Because of this unique 'loneliness' of
anger in the sense of not being paired,
we tend to make our anger—and certainly
other people's—lonely in the basic sense.
Your anger scares me. Please keep it to
yourself! It scares me because it reminds
me of my own, and I'm scared of that
because there is no way of controlling it.
Now what I understand Rosenberg to be
doing is the opposite of this enforced
privatisation of another person's anger—
and let us think of the anger of the group
that has just killed someone in our group.
I let them know that I know, at first hand,
what they are mad at, and, deeper, what
they are afraid of, what they have to pro-
tect at all costs. I really appreciate how
they feel the have to kill to protect them-

selves, and I communicate this. (How
treacherous language can be! When I
wrote those words 'I really appreciate' I
meant just that, but reading them I heard
what we say so easily in letters; I really
am sorry about that. Really!)

Now I would never have said what I am
saying, I would never have dared to apply
my principle at these awful frontiers of
conflict, if I had not been informed that
Rosenberg does this all over the troubled
world. What do you say to this?

Our work is designed to help people learn
to empathize with one another's needs
and concerns, and begin to see that the
'other side' is simply a group of humans
trying to protect themselves and meet
their needs. We have seen hatred and
desire for punishment transformed into
hope—when people received empathy
from those who had killed their families.
We have seen those who committed the
violence sincerely mourn—when they
received empathy from those who had
been violated by their actions. We have
seen people on both sides lose the
desire to punish each other—and then
work together to ensure that everyone's
needs are met. We have seen former
enemies create programs together to
make up for the harm they created and
ensure the safety of future generations.

I find it amazing that what I have learned,
from Lonergan and Focusing and Girard,
of our structure as humans is so good that
it works where the newspapers have
nothing to add but fuel to the flames. It
engenders a certain complacency. And
then I remember that for Aquinas com-
placency, in a sense quite unavailable
today, is a precious thing, a delight that
follows on getting it right. I recall the
splendid articles of Fred Crowe SJ, 'Com-

placency and Concern in Aquinas' in
Theological Studies. Our trouble is that all
we know of good will is concern, which
follows on complacency.

The privacy of anger—mine as well as
yours—is an illusion, because the privacy
of all passion is an illusion. We touch
here the famous sermon of Newman,
"On Christian Sympathy", in which he
attributes "the insipid nature of our
religiousness" to our failure to reveal our
deeper selves to each other, each of us
keeping a dark secret which, could we be
released from this captivity, would show
itself to be the same in everyone.

I am still fascinated, though, as to how I
can communicate to the man who wants
to kill me that I 'know' where he's
coming from in a way that changes his
mind. It seems quite bizarre. I can only
suggest that showing I am familiar with
his desperation at its source comes to
him as such a surprise that he changes.
But I don't have the onus of proving to
you that it works. Unless Rosenberg is a
liar, it does. It remains to me only to be
delighted, to be 'complacent' and, at a
deeper level of enlightened faith, not
surprised.

It is in conversation that insights tend to
come. This evening, with one of our
younger brethren who asked me what I
was working on, I said I was exploring
Eckhart's unique stance, of being in the
mind of God, as the basis of conflict
resolution. He asked, "How d'you do that,
have the mind of God?" Suddenly it
occurred to me. When, following
Chapman, I newly, and with desire,
attend to nothing in particular, am I not
"backing into the mind of God?" God is
total consciousness, nothing-but-subject,
with no objects. In allowing my mind to

be *itself* without objects, I am 'in agreement' with absolute mind. Chapman says the nothing-in-particular is God, and I understand this act as a groping *into* God, and there is no difference between backing into God and letting myself be taken into God. The metaphor of backing only accentuates the receptivity which is implied also in 'groping into' (except that that's not English!) as opposed to 'groping for.' With the All, to grope is as passive as to back. I like 'backing' for it is very much what happened to Tolle, and I said as much: he was pulled, bent double, hands and feet last, hands losing the disappearing air.

Thus the key-idea for Eckhart, of our participation in the mind of God, is enacted, acted-out in contemplative praying. It is not only a doctrine but a lived reality, the very drama of the soul. In prayer I become the God who 'rains alike on the just and the unjust'—a key Gospel saying for Girard. Prayer is peacemaking in essence. Peacemaking is prayer in action. In resonating with the fear and anger of the vengeful and hurt inviting the vengeful into its divine security, I am only extending contemplative praying. Only!!

Coda

In his latest work, which a friend has downloaded from the internet, Gendlin is predicting "science in the first person." This would be a humanising of science, whose abstraction from human experience has after all made of it a curse as well as a blessing. Gendlin's internet book is called *Thinking Beyond Patterns*, by which he means the thinking that *creates* patterns that it comes to need. His idea is that thought patterns are not imposed on the data of sense but arise out of the interplay between the thought and the

imagined. To my purpose in this paper, he maintains that it is possible to know our minds at work in a far more immediate way than we have been able to conceive of so far. This involves an extension of the data of consciousness into the interplay between, for instance, the intellectual 'light' and the sight of the water rising in Archimedes' bath, between the 'light' and the apple falling for Newton. Certainly a poem has to be written on the role of 'light' in those dramatic moments of discovery. In short, between 'man' and 'nature.' Man could thus cease to be the bully of matter and become its soul. Gendlin finds that a basic assumption rules the modern mind, that order is something imposed by 'mind' on feeling, whereas order arises out of an incredibly intricate interplay between them, as Wittgenstein discovered in the mazes of language. It is not surprising that Lonergan was enthusiastic about the work of Gendlin.

What is the light invisible that falls
On that apple's fall for the first time
So that the trivial surprises, calls
For whole attention as the felt sublime?

Why do we call it light in the first place
Since it is not the light in which we see?
And yet it is, it's only that by grace
We see again what's there, this time for me.

What of the tumble of new words that comes
Immediately after we have stopped
In our tracks and we try them, which one sums
Up what we have discovered, mind unpropped?
Well, as I think of this, I think I've heard
Yousay, In the Beginning was the Word.

Praying is backing into the all mind
Bent double, pulled so feet and hands comes last
Hands open to leave all of me behind
So I am nowhere and the world is past.
Prayer has no object, any more than One

Who is all subject, principle, beginning,
Silence that speaks a word that is the Son
On whom our world, and all the worlds, are
spinning.

A God outside who gives us information
About himself, is our first travesty,
Formal denial of the Incarnation
By eyes that pierce the dark and will not see.

Let first mind take me into love for all
Who suffer memories that must appal.

Practicum

Here is a simple exercise.

The theory: Concepts are the result of the light of intellect falling upon phantasms. *An experience:* Archimedes doesn't know how to tell the difference between a crown of pure gold and a crown made of alloy. Lowering himself into his bath, he sees the water rising and suddenly he gets it. Weigh the amount of water displaced by the crown, and compare this with the weight of water displaced by a piece of gold of the same weight as the crown. Isn't the theory describing exactly this experience? If it isn't then you are missing the data of consciousness. But you might say, this is a simple practical matter, there's no need to create a portentous concept like 'the data of consciousness.' Yes, this was a simple discovery of know-how. And the question is, whether this simple explanation, the discovery of a cute piece of know-how, *exemplifies the wholly abstract and universally applicable theory*, of 'intellectual light' falling on a 'phantasm' or image. This is the example with which Lonergan begins his great book (and to show how stupid I am, for years his wording of the solution "weigh the crown in water!" conjured up an image of the crown in a tank of water somehow being weighed!) And a few

years ago in the States, graduate students in many universities were asked, in a test, to explain Archimedes' discovery. All the answers, without exception, used the technical terms in which the theory is finally expressed. No one was asking what was the idea that suddenly came to Archimedes and thrilled him: if I took a lump of lead the same weight as myself and lowered that into the bath, I bet the water wouldn't rise nearly as high! (I am indebted to my confrère Leo Maidlow-Davies for this suggestion.) If you sense a gulf between this account and dull-eyed students trying to tell the story in terms of 'specific gravity' (you can't of course, not as a story) you are understanding the data of consciousness as distinct from the data of sense. Maria Montessori based her whole method of elementary education on this Aristotelian-Thomist theory of knowledge. She saw that images are crucial. More sophisticated is the case of Clark Maxwell and electromagnetic theory. On the verge of the discovery, he still just couldn't get it. Then, during a sea voyage, he had disturbed nights infested with dreams of coils and flying sparks. One morning he woke, and was able to spell it all out. And, at the *Readers' Digest* level, I once read, "Research has established that ninety percent of the world's creative ideas were conceived in moments of idleness." And I'm afraid I have to add, that the way I described the Archimedean insight continues to show my stupidity at the practical level. I say, 'take a piece of lead the weight of my body, and I bet you it will displace a lot less water than I do!' Well yes, but the 'I bet you' is a little naive, for I haven't yet taken into account the most obvious thing of all. They weighed things in those days, that's how they

traded. So they had what we call weights, the things you put on the scales to balance what you are weighing. 'I bet you' is not the way I would now introduce the matter. Rather I would say, 'and it's obvious that the weights (too many alas!) that I have to put on the scale when I weigh myself will displace a lot less water than I do!'

Coda 2

The main question that emerged from the 'Day' for which the above was the second paper was: can empathy be philosophically grounded? If there is a ground here, it is implied in that sitting loose to myself which grounds the distinction between the data of sense and the data of consciousness. A strong model for this sitting-loose is Tolle's experience. Surrendering to a power that was not negotiable, he shed the self with which we come to identity, the self that is desire's puppet, according to Oughourlian. Tolle is what I can only call a freak of grace. The self he was left with was in the power of now, the non-negotiable power. Now this self is in everybody, and it is awakened contagiously. People came to feel it in Tolle and said 'I want what you have. Can you give it me?' and he replied, 'You already have it, only you can't feel it because your mind is making too much noise.' Surely this is the ground of empathy! There is no problem of empathy. Or rather, the 'problem' is 'how can I feel what you are feeling; how can I feel your feeling?' and of course by definition I cannot. But the problem is the false problem: how can my illusory selfhood feel the same as yours? The problem of empathy is only 'solved' by ceasing to exist, which is what happened when people questioned Tolle and he

gave that answer. Meister Eckhart 'solved' the 'problem' of empathy when he found his voice as the purely-subject mind of God in everybody, when he helped his hearers to allow the divine Word to be born in their soul.

But we have to think this through in the *much* more gutsy circumstances we are in, the world of Marshall Rosenberg. When I persuade my would-be killer that I feel his rage, I am in touch with myself as victim *not* of others' cruelty or of nature's, but of my own self-directed rage. Once I fully know what I do to myself by the way I live, I know what he is doing to himself by his rage at life. We say, always complacently and always of another, 'he's his own worst enemy!' Self-punishment is as visible to us in others as it is invisible to us as what we are doing all the time.

When Rimbaud said in that telegram to a friend (Verlaine?) "Je est un autre!" was he onto this—Rimbaud of whom Gendlin suggested that France could have had in him a Shakespeare, if he had not died in his early twenties. Did he have a natural sense of himself as the victim of his rage? What was Eliot feeling when he wrote:

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.
(Preludes IV)

Whom but this does the man on the cross stand for, the "Word in the desert most attacked by voices of temptation" (Burnt Norton) Jesus on the cross makes manifest the non-manifest in us. He words the silence in his flesh.

Now comes another question. Is it only the self thus known, in me and in others, that can know creation out of nothing?

Is it only the self as eternal that can know the self as what once was not? And even that is getting it wrong, because creation out of nothing is not: *first* there was nothing, *then* there was being. Creation is not in time, but of time, and I am arguing, in an article to appear I am told in *Contagion*, that we have from modern astrophysics a more sophisticated bafflement than is provided by tired old theology in this matter: of a big-bang whose 'point' is everywhere and everywhen, the point being that this new science is pulling from under our feet the rug put there by any notion we may have of God as another country, a strange land, theology's continual crippling of the mystic in us.

Perhaps I am saying that we know creation out of nothing as the non-divinity of the eternal in man. This would mean that our primary datum for creation out of nothing is the Incarnation, the eternal in man manifest. The man who *is* God shows us the man who is not. After all, Paul draws our attention to the second man who is heavenly.

Concluding fragment

God is 'nothing in particular' in prayer, and *each* particular in living. The nothing-in-particular of prayer is a blank check for God to cash in the particular of the present moment, all of which is willed for me. An indiscrete metaphor suggests itself: that Tolle touched the live wire between the two points, when he heard the words 'resist nothing.' One of the Sixties' gurus, Alan Watts I think, noted in Chapman the radical idea that everything you feel at this moment is God's will for you. There's a precious understanding of our sexuality buried here. I once told a woman on retreat with me, who was handling a very

painful relationship, how it had come to me in prayer to recall one of my more bizarre sexual fantasies, and how I had 'known' this as prayer. When we said goodbye at the end of the retreat, she said to me, "that thing, you told me about sex in prayer, I shall never ever forget it."

“ When Chuang Tzu was about to die, his disciples began planning a splendid funeral.

But he said: 'I shall have heaven and earth for my coffin; the sun and moon will be the jade symbols hanging by my side; planets and constellations will shine as jewels all around me, and all beings will be present as mourners at the wake. What more is needed? Everything is amply taken care of!'

But they said: 'We fear that crows and kites will eat our Master.'

'Well,' said Chaung Tzu, 'above ground I shall be eaten by crows and kites, below by ants and worms. In either case I shall be eaten. Why are you so partial to birds?' ”

*The Way of
Chuang
Tzu*