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A TURN TO THE SUBJECT AS A RADICAL BEGINNING OF THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

This study investigates the foundational epistemological question of whether the subject can generate objectivity—a question that lies at the heart of contemporary debates in knowledge acquisition. It explores the critical relationship between the subject and the world, focusing on how knowledge is formed and the role the subject plays in this process. Specifically, the study undertakes a comparative analysis of René Descartes' and Edmund Husserl's conceptions of the *Cogito*, examining their limitations of their approaches in linking the subjective world and objectivity. It further highlights on how Lonergan's approach offers a mediating synthesis in overcoming those limitations.

While Descartes begins with radical doubt to secure the indubitable *ego cogito*, Husserl focuses on the structure of consciousness and intersubjectivity. Bernard Lonergan offers a dynamic and developmental view of the subject as experiencing, understanding, and judging. Lonergan's coginitional structure act as a mediating solution emphasizing on Consciousness, intentionality, horizon, and conversion as foundational concepts that bridge subjectivity and objectivity. Using a qualitative methodology—combining textual analysis with argumentation reconstruction—this study critically analyzes how Lonergan's epistemological framework transcends Descartes' and Husserl's limitations in linking the subjective world and objectivity.

Keywords: Turn to the Subject, Intentionality, Consciousness, Subjectivity, Objectivity

Introduction

Philosophy has long struggled with the question of the turn to the subject in acquiring knowledge. Rene Descartes' and Edmund Husserl' turn to the subject has a great contribution in the development of the new science. Descartes and Husserl shares the similar foundational ground even though their approaches diverge each other at some extent. They share similarities in building the new science by turning to the subject as Descartes employs the method of radical doubt in attaining objective certainty using his famous dictum "*Cogito Ergo Sum.*" Husserl on the other hand uses phenomenological reduction and intentionality as well as intersubjectivity. Descartes' methodological doubt and Husserl's phenomenological reduction are two landmark responses to the crisis of foundations. Yet, both thinkers face challenges in connecting their subjective points of departure to the world of objective knowledge. Bernard Lonergan, a 20th-century philosopher and theologian, critically engages with both Descartes and Husserl, offering a theory of cognitional structure that seeks to overcome their limitations. This paper aims to examine the epistemological limitations in Descartes' and Husserl's approach to the turn to the subject in obtaining objective knoweldge and how Lonergan's account offers a mediating cure. The main question is: what are the limitations in Descartes and Husserl's approaches in linking the world and the objective knowledge and how Lonergan overcome them.

1. Background of the Study

One of the most significant developments in modern philosophy is the shift from object to the subject that knows and acts, and to the consciousness of the subject and its inner operations. In consequence, modern philosophers usually begin not with metaphysics, but with the immediate data of consciousness. The transition from ancient and medieval philosophy to modern philosophy is characterized with a profound shift in how knowledge is understood. For centuries, knowledge was subscribed to metaphysical theories, which aimed to explain the foundational principles of existence. In Greek and medieval thought, metaphysics was the starting point, with knowledge being seen as something that could only be understood by considering the nature of the cosmos and its first principles. Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle rooted knowledge in the object: the external reality that the mind must conform to in order to know the truth.[12] Plato divided the world into two types, the world of ideas which is beyond physical reality and the doxa world. Plato explains that true knowledge lies in ideas, not in physical reality.[3] This epistemological stance lasted until the time of Copernicus. Copernicus with his masterpiece, the Copernican Revolution, initiated a scientific revolution in which the centre of knowledge is known and questioned to find its justification.[4]

However, in the modern era, a significant shift occurred, moving away from the external object and towards the consciousness of the subject itself. This transition is most advocated by René Descartes, who is often regarded as the

[1]. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 2nd ed. Issued for the Lonergan Research Institute of Regis College, Toronto (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 261. Also quoted in The Fellows of the Woodstock Theological Center, *The Realms of Desire: An Introduction to the Thought of Bernard Lonergan* (Washington, DC: Woodstock Theological Center, 2011), 73.

[2]. Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Satre: A History of Philosophy,* 6th. (USA: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1999), 55−59.

[3]. Stumpf, *Socrates to Satre*, 55−58.

[4]. H. Butterfield, M.A. *The Origins of Modern Science 1300−1800* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1959), 26−33.

father of modern philosophy. He is famous with his dictum *Cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am") which is a foundational turning point in philosophy. Descartes employs a method of doubt. He doubts everything, including the existence of the external world, but in doing so, Descartes found certainty in his own act of thinking. This marked the beginning of a focus on the subject—the individual mind—as the foundation of knowledge.[5]

Descartes' turn from the metaphysical traditions of the Greeks and medieval philosophers like Thomas Aquinas, who emphasized on the substance and objective categories. Descartes championed a new epistemological focus on self-consciousness and the mind's role in acquiring knowledge. He turned the philosopher's attention inward to the self-examination, initiating a process that later was be developed and polished by Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl.[6]

The move from object-based to subject-based epistemology introduced key philosophical concepts that have influenced modern and contemporary thought. The philosophical context of this shift revolves around the tension between rationalism and empiricism, two major epistemological schools that grew out of Descartes' work. Descartes, alongside other rationalists like Spinoza[7] and Leibniz, argued that reason alone could provide knowledge of the world. In Descartes' view, the mind, with its ability to think and doubt, is the only thing that can lead to the absolutely certain. His method of doubt aimed to throw away all doubtful beliefs, and finally, revealing that the thinking subject is the foundation of all knowledge. In contrast, figures like John Locke,[8] George Berkeley,[9] and David Hume[10] emphasize the role of sensory experience in the acquisition of knowledge. John Locke expound the origin of knowledge. He explains that "Fountain of knowledge is experience," in that, "all our knowledge is founded and from that it ultimately derives itself."[11] According to empiricists, knowledge begins with the external world, and the senses provide the raw data that the mind processes. As Lonergan observes, "Once the two sides are split, the problem is to put them together again."[12] These philosophical traditions have continued to shape debates in epistemology, particularly regarding the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, and the role of the subject in acquiring knowledge.

2. Descartes' Methodic Doubt and Certainty of Knowledge

Rene Descartes (1509-1650), is famous of his work Cartesian Cogito and considered as father of modern philosophy. His life was filled with the quest of certainty of knowledge. Descartes desired to construct a system of true knowledge that is based solely on the power human reason.[13]Descartes marks the shift from Renaissance and new begging of Modern Science. In *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy,* Descartes is convincing that any thoughtful pursuit of knowledge begins by doubting all inherited beliefs—particularly those accepted without critical examination.[14]

In 1641, Descartes published his seminal work *Meditations on First Philosophy*, where he presented arguments for doubting all of his previously held beliefs. He articulates that over the course of his life, he had accepted many things as true, but later after critical discover he found that they were doubtful and needed to be reconsidered. Indeed, Descartes addresses why it is necessary to place all former beliefs in doubt in order to arrive at that which is indubitable and certain. He writes, "Once the foundations of a building are undermined, anything built on them collapses of its own accord; so I will go straight for the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested."[15]The direction to the principles indicates Descartes' turn to the subject—the thinking self—as the ground of all knowledge.

In Descartes' own words "Anything which admits of the slightest doubt I will set aside just as if I had found it to be wholly false; and I will proceed in this way until I recognize something certain... I hope for great things if I manage to find just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshakeable."[16]

Besides, in *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes underlines his view of the doubt method by arguing that even if we doubt everything, it is illogical to think while at the same time not exist. Therefore, he asserts: ''I think, therefore I am' is the first and most certain proposition that presents itself to anyone who is philosophizing in the proper order."[17]Furthermore, having cast doubt on all beliefs that could possibly be doubted, Descartes discovers that thought is inseparable from his existence. In *Meditation Two*, he states: "At last I have discovered it—thought; this alone is inseparable from me. I am, I exist—that is certain. But for

[5]. Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies,* Revised Edition, Edited by John Cottingham, Translated by John Cottingham (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.

[6]. The Fellows of the Woodstock Theological Center, *The Realms of Desire,* 73.

[7]. Don Garrett, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza.* 2nd. (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[8]. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* 27th. (London: Thomas Tegg-Dublin, 1829).

[9]. George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knoweldge* (London: Fellow of Trinity-College, 1734).

[10]. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being An Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reforming Into Moral Subjects,* Vol. I. (London: White-Hart, 1739).

[11]. Quoted in Vere Chappell, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Prress, 1994), 148.

[12]. Quoted in The Fellows of the Woodstock Theological Center, *The Realms of Desire,* 75.

[13]. Cited from Renati Descartes, *Meditationes De Prima Philosophia: In Qva Dei Existentia Et Animae Immortalitas Demostratvr.* Pariis: Apud Michael Solv vid Iacobel,fub figno Phoenicis, MDCXLI, 9−10.

[14]. Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th. Translated by Donald Cress (Indianapolis/ Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 1998), 4.

[15]. Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies,* Revised Edition, Edited by John Cottingham, Translated by John Cottingham (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 12.

[16]. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* 16.

[17]. Rene Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Translated by Valentine Rodger Miller and Reese P. Miller (Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1982), 5.

how long? For as long as I am thinking… I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks."[18]

In addition, the affirmation of *Cogito, ergo sum* leads Descartes to express that the self, the "I" who thinks, is "...a substance whose whole essence or nature is simply to think, and which, in order to exist, has no need of any place and does not depend on any material thing."[19]This recognition forms the basis of Descartes' epistemology, where the thinking self becomes the primary point of certainty in the search for knowledge.

Descartes' Objectivity and its Foundations

Descartes aims to examine the very foundation from which all knowledge originates. In his meditations, he puts emphases on the subject — the mind — as an agent engaged in critical reasoning. He argues that, it is through the activity of the mind that one arrives at *clear and distinct ideas*. For Descartes, clear and distinct ideas are the criteria for truth and the basis of objective knowledge.[20] This approach, which may be described as a *subjective path to objectivity*, reflects Descartes' conviction that knowledge begins within the subject but ultimately transcends it. By applying methodical doubt, the mind eliminates uncertainty and identifies those truths that are indubitable. Through this process, Descartes believes, the subject arrives at objective knowledge — knowledge that is not merely a product of personal opinion, but universally valid.[21]

However, Descartes also acknowledges that this knowledge, while grounded in the subject's reasoning, points beyond the subject itself. He refers to the *natural light* as the source that illuminates these clear and distinct truths. Yet, he does not fully articulate the nature of this knowledge beyond the subject, possibly due to the limitations of his subjective method.[22] For Descartes, the *Cogito* — the thinking subject — serves as both the starting point and the guarantee of objectivity. Though rooted in the subject, objective knowledge is made possible through the rigorous application of reason and the clarity of ideas that emerge from it.

Descartes moves further explaining how capable the self is in examining the knowledge the clear and distinct knowledge beyond subjectivity. Descartes confesses saying that "I find with me countless ideas of things which even though they may not exist anywhere outside me still cannot be called nothing; for although … they are not my invention but have their own true and immutable natures."[23] With this affirmation, Descartes acknowledges the presence of clear and distinct knowledge beyond subjectivity which are clear and distinct in their nature, but he articulate that their foundations lies in the subject — the *Cogito*.

Descartes maintains that ideas originating from a thinking subject, when perceived clearly and distinctly, possess a form of *objective reality*. This reality is not based on external validation but is grounded in the representational content of the ideas themselves.[24] As he explains: "The nature of an idea is such that of itself it requires no formal reality except what it derives from my thought, of which it is a mode."[25] He further notes that: "We have a sort of inner constraint or natural inclination which leads us to accept as true whatever ideas we perceive in a clear and distinct way."[26]This natural inclination, or *inner constraint*, reflects Descartes' belief that the subject is oriented toward truth by its very nature. It affirms the connection between the internal structures of the mind—its innate ideas—and the objectivity of the knowledge it attains.

2. Husserl's Cogito and the Apodictic Certainty

While Descartes introduced the *Cogito* as a foundational basis for indubitable knowledge, Husserl in his work, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, presents a significant restructuring of Descartes' *Cogito.* He advances it within his phenomenological framework, emphasizing the centrality of the subject in establishing apodictic certainty—that is, certainty which is absolutely indubitable. For Husserl, the *Cogito* is not merely a starting point but a methodological anchor for all claims to knowledge, rooted in the lived experience and intentionality of the subject.For Husserl, the ultimate goal of the *Cogito* is to establish an absolute foundation for knowledge, not through abstract reasoning alone, but through the lived, immediate experience of the conscious subject.[27] He argues that philosophical investigation must turn its attention to the *givenness* of phenomena—how reality appears in experience. As he writes, "Our investigation should turn its attention toward the givenness or appearance of reality, that is, it should focus on the way in which reality is given to us in experience. We should… not let preconceived theories form our experience, but let our experience determine our theories… We should let the originary [*sic*] giving intuition be the source of all knowledge, a source that no authority (not even modern science) should be allowed to question."[28]This phenomenological approach has triggered Husserl to develop the method of epoché or *bracketing*, which suspends all presumptions about the external world in order to return to the pure experience of consciousness letting the intuition facilitates reality. In doing so, Husserl places the experiencing subject—the *transcendental ego*—the cornerstone of meaning and certainty.

The turn to the subject which places the thinking subject at the center of epistemological inquiry, deeply influences Husserl's own development of phenomenology. For Husserl, turning to the subject is not only a critical step but an essential foundation for all scientific and

[18]. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* 18.
[19]. Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations,* 19.
[20]. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* 12.
[21]. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* 12.
[22]. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* 29−30.
[23]. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* 44.
[24]. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* 28.
[25]. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* 28.
[26]. Marcelo De Araujo. "Descartes on Mathematical Truths: Coherence and Correspondence in the Refutation of Skeptism." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* (University of Illinois Press on behalf of North American Philos) XXII (October 2006): 319-337, 324.
[27]. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology,* Seventh Impression. Translated by Dorion Cairns (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 1.
[28]. Quoted from Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, (Califonia: Stanford University Press, 2003), 45.

philosophical knowledge. According to Husserl, this turn to the subject carries two key implications: [1] The Necessity of Self-Reflection: Anyone aspiring to be a philosopher must first turn inward—into themselves—to critically examine all previously held beliefs. This introspective withdrawal enables the philosopher to reconstruct knowledge on a new, indubitable foundation. [2] The Radical Reformation of Knowledge: This turn also involves discarding all preconceived data and rebuilding knowledge in a purified form, free from ambiguity.[29]

The *Cogito*— the subject—serves as the root and source of renewal for the sciences, grounding them in philosophical reflection.[30]For Husserl, the examination of the subject—as the origin of all conscious acts and knowledge—is not just important; it is fundamental. He asserts that understanding the subject is the radical beginning necessary for grasping the truth of science. The subject, as the source of all deductive reasoning, forms the foundation of absolute certainty.[31]Husserl reinforces this view by stating that any valid cognition must follow a necessary *order of cognition*, progressing from what is intrinsically earlier (the subject) to what is later (objects of knowledge).[32] He argues that the basis of all knowledge lies in the very nature of things, and to know anything objectively, we must first understand the subject as the bearer of meaning and intentionality.[33]

The *Cogito* thus holds central significance in Husserl's phenomenology. It is through the *Cogito* that the subject constitutes the meaning of the world. As Husserl puts it: "The objective world—the world that exists for me, that always has and always will exist for me, the only world that ever can exist for me—this world, with all its objects, derives its whole sense and its existential status, which it has for me, from me myself, from me as the transcendental Ego."[34] Indeed for Husserl, the being of the self—the pure *Cogito*—and its intentional acts (*Cogitationes*), are prior to the natural being of the world. The world, exists only as it is constituted by the conscious subject. This reversal of traditional metaphysics places the transcendental subject at the very heart of phenomenological inquiry and apodictic certainty.[35]

In Husserl's phenomenology, the subject—or transcendental ego—is not merely a passive observer but the very source and ground of all knowledge and certainty. The subject's intentional acts are what confer meaning and coherence to the world. Husserl emphasizes that by returning to the ego, philosophy can uncover the foundational structures upon which all sense and being are constituted. He asserts: "When we go back to the ego, we can explicate the founding and founded strata with which…we can reach the absolute being and process in which the being of the world shows its ultimate truth and in which the ultimate problems of being reveal themselves, bringing into the thematic field all the disguises that unphilosophical naïveté cannot penetrate [*alle Verhüllungen der unphilosophischen Naivität*]."[36] This philosophical return to the subject reveals the source of objective knowledge, affirming that all knowledge must originate from and flow through the subject's intentional consciousness.

Husserl's Objectivity and its Foundations

In his *Second Meditation*, Husserl undertakes a detailed investigation into how objectivity is constituted within consciousness. He begins by drawing a fundamental distinction between real objectivities and categorical objectivities. Real objectivities pertain to material-ontological distinctions—such as spatially located physical objects or living beings—which emerge from the notion of a concrete real individual. In contrast, categorical objectivities arise through a *generative-constructive* process: they are not given but rather constituted step-by-step through the activity of the ego.[37] Husserl asserts the radical claim that "all that exists is and must be a constituted product."[38] Even human consciousness, he explains, is necessarily constituted within the world: "Conscious life is likewise constituted necessarily as human in the constituted world, and as a human conscious life in which the world is intended, psychically constituted, and so forth."[39] This formulation underlines the central role of the transcendental subject in the constitution of all meaning and objectivity. Objective reality, then, is not something external and self-contained but something that gains its validity and coherence through the operations of consciousness.

Central to Husserl's account of objectivity is the role of the *cogito*—the self-aware subject. He argues that the ego engages in a form of solipsistic philosophizing, seeking absolute certainty within the pure inwardness of consciousness.[40] From this starting point, Husserl claims, all knowledge of an objective outward world must be deduced:"The ego carries on a kind of solipsistic philosophizing. He seeks apodictically certain ways by which, within his own pure inwardness, an Objective out wardness can be deduced."[41]In Husserl's view, objectivity cannot be considered independently of the subject. Rather, it is constituted by the transcendental ego—the ultimate source of meaning and coherence. He adds that, all forms of objectivity—natural, axiological, practical, aesthetic, or cultural—are constituted through consciousness. Husserl states:"Everything we have made clear to ourselves with respect to objectivities belonging to nature… must hold in the case of all axiological and all practical objectivities… all aesthetic objects, all cultural formations, etc. and likewise, in the case of all transcendences of whatever sort which become constituted in the manner peculiar to

[29]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 2.
[30]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 4.
[31]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 7.
[32]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 13.
[33]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 12.
[34]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 26.
[35]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 21.
[36]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 52.
[37]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 52.
[38]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 52.
[39]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 52.
[40]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 27.
[41]. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 3.

consciousness."[42] Thus, for Husserl, no objective entity can be meaningfully grasped outside of consciousness. All objectivity is mediated through the intentional acts of the subject. The ego, as the absolute origin of sense and constitution, serves as the only valid foundation upon which objective knowledge can be built. Now, the self-consciousness has become a bridge toward objectivity. Thus, for Husserl, the subject, through intentionality, serves as the origin and foundation of all objective meaning. Objectivity is, therefore, inseparable from subjectivity.

In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl reaffirms the fundamental relation between subject and object, stating: "Thus, in me, 'another I' achieves ontic validity as co-present with his own ways of being self-evidently verified, which are obviously quite different from those of a 'sense'-perception"[43] He goes further, asserting that each human being bears within themselves a transcendental I—not as a mere psychological component but as the very structure by which the world becomes intelligible: "Each human being bears within himself a transcendental I—not as a real part or a stratum of his soul (which would be absurd) but rather insofar as he is the self-objectification, as exhibited through phenomenological self-reflection, of the corresponding transcendental 'I'."[44] Thus, the interconnection between subjectivity and objectivity is central to Husserl's entire phenomenological project. The objective world is not a separate, pre-existing domain but rather emerges from the dynamic acts of transcendental consciousness. Subjectivity is the very condition for the possibility of objectivity.

Challenges in Linking the Subject to Objective Knowledge

Despite Descartes and Husserl's influence on the subject in acquiring knowledge. There are scholars who present their critiques to both approaches. The critiques raised by Gilbert Ryle in his work *The Concept of Mind,* argues that Cartesian dualism is "the ghost in the machine,"[45] Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason*, emphasizes that Descartes'*Cogito* lacks epistemological potency because it isolates thought from the experiential world.[46] Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time, a*rticulates:being is always 'being-in-the-world.'[47] Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception,* emphasizes on importance of the lived body in shaping experience.[48] Jean-Paul Sartre on the other hand in his work *Being and Nothingness*, emphasizes that transcendental ego cannot serve as a viable foundation for certainty,[49] Hans - Gadamer in *Truth and Method,* stresses on language[50] and Jurgen Habermas in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, emphasizes on intersubjectivity,[51] and Dermot Moran in *Introduction to Phenomenology*, underscores on publicity and authentic awareness of man.[52] Dan Zahavi in his work *Husserl's Phenomenology*, highlights that Husserl's phenomenology is an "an unphenomenological abstraction."[53] These are some among the critiques that unveils the challenges in Descartes' and Husserl's approaches in linking the world and the objectivity. These challenges triggers Lonergan to come up with new approach on synthesizing their views on the subject in acquiring knowledge.

3. Lonergan and the Subject

Bernard Lonergan makes a profound contribution to the contemporary understanding of the subject, especially in relation to knowledge acquisition. Drawing on the philosophical legacies of Descartes and Husserl, Lonergan builds a more dynamic and structured account of the subject as the center of discovery and understanding. In his *Aquinas Lecture: The Subject*, Lonergan argues that the subject emerges from the data of consciousness, where one experiences acts of inquiry, grasps intelligible forms in sensible representations, and grounds the formation of concepts.[54] For Lonergan, the evolution of human understanding occurs not because concepts themselves change, but because the mind—the subject—develops and transforms. Hence, the subject is the origin and engine of conceptual change.[55]

Lonergan emphasizes that the goodness of the subject is found in their actions and choices.[56] In *Phenomenology and Logic*, he asserts that consciousness is a vital source of information, and the subject carries the weight of responsibility, especially in forming judgments.[57]He adds: although the subject does not choose to exist but "finds himself there," his freedom, though limited by his existence, is expressed through conscious choices. It is consciousness that gives rise to what Lonergan refers to as a second nature—a self-determined essence formed through inner

[42]. Edmund Husserl,*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book (trans.* Translated by F. Kersten. Bostom: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983),124.

[43]. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*(Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 185.

[44]. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,*186.

[45]. Ryle, Ryle, *The Concept of Mind,* (London: Barnes & Nobles University Paperbacks, 1949), 17.

[46]. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* 2nd, Revised, Translated by F. Max Muller (London: The MacMillian Company 1922), 282−283.

[47]. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1962), 80.

[48]. 2Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Trans. Colin Smith, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1962), 146.

[49]. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Trans. Hazel Barnes, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 22−23.

[50]. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, 2nd Revised Edition, (New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2004), 470.

[51]. Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 313.

[52]. Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, (USA: Routledge, 2000), 230.

[53]. Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, (Califonia: Stanford University Press, 2003), 63.

[54]. Bernard Lonergan, S.J., S.T.D. *The Aquinas Lecture: The Subject* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1968), 9.

[55]. *The Aquinas Lecture,* 10

[56]. *The Aquinas Lecture,* 26.

[57]. Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Phenomenology and Logic.* Edited by Philip J. McShane, Vol. 18. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001,172.

decisions.[58] This second nature differentiates individuals and becomes the very foundation of knowledge, for knowledge begins with choice. Thus, in Lonergan's framework, the subject is fundamentally a being of free acts, capable of moral and intellectual responsibility.[59]

Lonergan conceptualizes human knowledge as a developmental process. He outlines a threefold division in the structure of human knowing: [i] Known – the domain of questions that the subject can raise and answer. [ii] Known unknown – questions the subject can raise and find significant but cannot answer, even while recognizing that they are beyond their current capability (*docta ignorantia*). [iii] Unknown unknown – questions that the subject cannot raise at all, nor find meaningful or solvable (*indocta ignorantia*).[60]These distinctions reveal the limits and possibilities of human inquiry. To articulate these boundaries, Lonergan introduces the notion of "horizon." A horizon, in his terms, is the limit that separates different realms of knowledge—it is the boundary between *docta* and *indocta ignorantia*. It defines the universe within which a person operates, as one can only attend to what is within one's horizon.[61]

Lonergan adds that in obtaining new knoweldge an individual moves from one horizon to another. But to move from one horizon requires one's conversion. For Lonergan, conversion is the process by which one moves from one horizon to another. It involves a transformation in the subject's thinking, judging, evaluating, and perceiving. Conversion is not merely a change of opinion, but a radical shift in perspective—a reorientation of the entire framework through which the subject engages with reality.[62] It brings new principles and concepts into play and enables the subject to access previously inaccessible forms of understanding.

Lonergan in continuing expressing the capability of obtaining knoweldge by the subject, the concept of *indocta ignorantia,*in his views, is not an excuse for what a person does not know; rather, it is a reflection of the limits of their intelligence, freedom, and responsibility. The acquisition of knowledge, therefore, depends not simply on passive reception, but on the subject's active engagement with their own development. The subject's growth is defined by their ability to expand their horizon and undergo conversion. In this light, horizon and conversion become defining features of both the subject and their capacity for intellectual and moral development.[63]

Lonergan's Objectivity and its Foundations

Building on the views of Descartes and Husserl, Lonergan introduces an advanced understanding of the subject-object relationship. He emphasizes that the presence of the object to the subject is always intentional. Central to his view is the concept of intentionality: the idea that every object is present to the subject as something intended, while the subject is the one who intends. As he explains, the object is whatever is perceived, heard, desired, feared, investigated, understood, or conceived, and the subject is the conscious being who does these things.[64] There is no awareness without consciousness—just as one cannot see or hear while unconscious. In this, Lonergan makes a crucial distinction between being aware and being what is aware of—between subject and object.[65]

He further emphasizes that within the sphere of consciousness, the subject and object remain inseparable but fundamentally distinct. He states clearly that "the subject is never without an object, and the subject is never the object." This separation—this 'radical opposition'—defines their relationship. Even introspection does not dissolve the gap between them; it merely shifts its location.[66] Yet, this gap does not diminish the subject's importance. In fact, Lonergan sees the subject as the wellspring of meaning, truth, and knowledge.[67] All beliefs and certainties—whether formed through popular opinion, scientific reasoning, or philosophical inquiry—are rooted in intentional acts. Everything one thinks or affirms is simply a product of the subject intending, defining, considering, or positing.[68]

In this regard, Lonergan aligns himself with Husserl's emphasis on the primacy of the subject in epistemology. He echoes Husserl's view that the subject precedes everything else in certainty and examination. For Lonergan, the subject is the most assured and accessible foundation for any knowledge claim. Whether in science or in everyday reasoning, intentional acts form the basis of what we know and what we can be confident about.[69]
However, Lonergan does not adopt Husserl's perspective without criticism. While he agrees that the subject holds priority in the structure of knowing, he cautions against Husserl's rigid demand for absolute necessity and certitude. Knowledge, Lonergan insists, is grounded in factual truth, not in unattainable ideals. Seeking absolute certainty, he argues, leads not to firmer knowledge but to skepticism.[70]He also critiques Husserl's method of epoché, asserting that it confuses instinctual trust—what Santayana calls "animal faith"—with rational judgment. Ultimately, Ultimately, Lonergan moves beyond Husserl's transcendental reduction. For him, the final philosophical task is not merely to reduce experience to the subject but to situate both subject and object within the broader context of being itself. He writes that "the ultimate reduction is of subject and object, scientific world and world of common sense, to being."[71] The subject exists, and by existing, it is part of the totality of beings.[72] Thus, Lonergan concludes that while the subject holds primacy in knowledge and intentionality, it must ultimately be understood within the broader metaphysical framework of being itself—a realm that includes both subject and object.

[58]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 172.
[59]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 173.
[60]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 198.
[61]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 199.
[62]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 201.
[63]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 202.
[64]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 197.
[65]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 197.
[66]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 197.
[67]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 258.
[68]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 258.
[69]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 260.
[70]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 265.
[71]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 265.
[72]. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 265.

Conclusion

The epistemological turn initiated by Descartes and Husserl marked a critical turning point in modern thought by placing the subject at the center of knowledge. Although both Descartes' and Husserl's approaches face limitations—particularly in their approaches toward knoweldge acquisition —they each reveal the enduring philosophical tension between subjectivity and objectivity. Their efforts to ground knowledge in the subject continue to inspire debates on the complex interplay between the self and the world in the pursuit of knowledge. The duo frameworks enlighten the essential dimensions of subjectivity toward knoweldge, yet neither of them has successfully resolved the tension between the interconnectedness of subjectivity and objectivity. Lonergan offers an intermediate account. Through intentional operations of the human subject—experiencing, understanding, judging—Lonergan grounds knowledge not in abstract certainty but in the dynamic and verifiable acts of a historically and socially situated knower. His synthesis not only bridges the gap between subjectivity and objectivity but also provides a profound account of the processes involved in human understanding and the progress of knowledge.

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