

DYNAMICS AND DEMANDS OF UNDERSTANDING

(based upon the analysis of Bernard Lonergan)

We need and value and therefore (at least sometimes) seek to understand our experiences
and our world, in order to better respond to and cope with the world.

Dynamic

Demand

1. Awareness

Be aware! Give attention!

2. Intelligence

Be intelligent!

3. Rationality

Be rational!

4. Responsibility

Be Responsible!

Awareness, Intelligence, Rationality, and Responsibility are also **Intellectual Virtues**: character traits that are good to possess and essential to the one who wishes to grow in knowledge and understanding.

'The drive to understand is . . . the **radical unstructured why?** at the heart of our conscious life. If the drive to understand is unstructured, it is also **unlimited in its scope**. Its goal is **to understand, without limit**, everything that is to be understood . . . The horizon of the drive to understand appears to be **all of reality**. The drive to understand **is objective in its intention** . . . in the sense that **its goal is the real** rather than the imagined. It is not of itself confined to the biases of the personal subject nor to the conventional wisdom of its peers. Of itself, the drive to understand **is relentlessly critical** . . . For the drive to understand summons us . . . to set forth what we understand to be the case, and **the reasons for so understanding**; and **further questions are raised** both about our understanding and our reasons for it.

(Michael Novak)

An experience occurs that provokes curiosity and the desire to understand the experience.

Then

- *A question arises* and **we want to understand**: “What is ‘it’?”

First, one must **pay attention / focus awareness** upon ‘it’.

Then

- *A question arises*: “What could ‘it’ possibly be?”

Second, we **consider the intelligent possibilities / explanations** of ‘it’.

Then

- *A question arises*: “Which of the possible explanations is the correct one?”

Third, we **choose the most rational explanation** as the correct explanation.

so

Now, we understand what ‘it’ was- is!

But

- *A final question arises*: “What am I to do about ‘it’?”

Fourth and last, **we must act responsibly** – appropriately, given what we have come to understand.

So, WHY accept this analysis- this “understanding of understanding”?

1. It is what we / YOU actually do – is it not?
2. You would have to USE it to REJECT it!
3. It WORKS!