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David Coghlan

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ARTICLE

Authenticity as first person practice

An exploration based on Bernard Lonergan

David Coghlan
Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

ABSTRACT

In this article I explore how the notion of authenticity may be grounded in first person practice, rather than in the quality of research data. Drawing on the work of the philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan who follows a first person approach and who articulates a notion of authenticity, I explore how authenticity may be framed in terms of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible in engaging with the challenges of action research.

KEY WORDS

- action research
- authenticity
- Bernard Lonergan
- first person practice

In this article I explore the notion of authenticity in enacting action research. I ground my approach in the philosophical practice of first person inquiry, thereby positioning my understanding of authenticity (a term usually used to connote qualities like being genuine and true to values) in an appropriation of how I experience, understand, judge, and act in my life, and particularly in action research. Approaching authenticity as a quality within first person practice may be contrasted with an approach that views it as a quality within research data (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I explore how I understand authenticity as first person practice and how I seek to live and work authentically and how what I share may be of value to the action research community. My starting point is philosophical, not in the sense of engaging in philosophical discourse, but rather as a foundation for my own approach to living and for learning. I then introduce the work of Bernard Lonergan on whose empirical method I base my way of working and I move to exploring the notion of authenticity explicitly within that method, to make links to some existing action research frameworks and to draw some implications for action research practice.

The philosophical ground of first person practice

At its core, first person practice means that our own beliefs, values, assumptions, ways of thinking, strategies and behaviours and so on are afforded a central place of inquiry in our action research practice. It involves attention to how we experience ourselves in inquiry and in action, what Reason and Torbert (2001) refer to as ‘upstream inquiry’ and Marshall (1999) terms ‘living life as inquiry’. As Marshall (2001) describes it, self-reflective practice involves enacting inquiry with intent in a manner that is distinct for each person, suggesting that each individual must craft his/her own practice and attend to its quality through inner and outer arcs of attention, enacting cycles of action and reflection and being both active and receptive.

Philosophically, first person practice means that, rather than observing ourselves as objects from the outside, we experience ourselves as subjects with direct awareness of how we act and learn to grasp our own interiority. From his research on major figures and themes in ancient philosophy, Hadot (1995) discusses that the classic definition of philosophy as love of wisdom has got lost over the centuries, especially since the birth of natural science. He concludes that while ancient philosophy proposed an art of living, modern philosophy ‘appears above all as the construction of technical jargon reserved for specialists’ (p. 272). He explores how philosophy for the ‘ancients, such as Socrates, aimed at helping people live a good life . . . Philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual’s life’ (p. 265). As Hadot (1995, p. 274) points out, this

also involved ‘a duty to act in the service of the human community; that is to act in accordance with justice’. He concludes his book, by saying, ‘Philosophy is a conversion, a transformation of one’s way of being and living and a quest for wisdom’ (p. 275). Hadot’s discussion of ancient philosophy is echoed by Eikeland (2006) who illustrates how Aristotle’s notion of *phronesis* is significant for understanding action research. *Phronesis* refers to the qualities of acting justly and wisely in everyday action. Webb (1988) follows a similar theme as he discusses six contemporary philosophers who understand philosophy as ‘reflective inquiry into what it means to function consciously as an inquirer and as a responsible agent’ (p. 3). One of the philosophers he discusses is the Canadian philosopher-theologian, Bernard Lonergan. Despite the fact that in 1970 he featured on the cover of *Newsweek* as one of the most important minds of the 20th century and his major work, *Insight*, was regarded as one of the key books of the century, Lonergan is not widely known outside of Catholic theological and philosophical circles.

Bernard Lonergan

Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) was a Canadian, Catholic Jesuit priest, theologian-philosopher who taught at the Gregorian University in Rome and latterly in Toronto and Boston. Throughout his life he lectured and wrote on topics related to philosophy, theology and economics. He wrote two major books and numerous papers and lectures. In 1957 he published *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, a 750-page volume that explores the process of knowing, drawing on mathematics, physics, and psychology, as well as philosophy. In 1972 he published *Method in Theology*, a groundbreaking work that explores how theology reflects on religion. Toronto University Press has undertaken the publication of *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* and there are 26 volumes projected. Lonergan’s *Insight* is a massive philosophical work that builds on the medieval tradition of Thomas Aquinas and integrates it with modern philosophy of Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Hume, Locke, Husserl, and Heidegger, and modern science of Newton and Einstein. Lonergan’s grasp of ancient, medieval, and modern philosophy, theology, economics, mathematics, physics, history, biology, and psychology is awesome. His intellectual biography illustrates that he had a passionate desire to understand and his capacious mind led him into these fields in order to understand, not just these fields, but to ground the insights of these fields in a philosophy of history (Mathews, 2006).

I came to know Lonergan’s work in the early 1970s after a period in which I had been engaged in personal learning through encounter groups, which were based on the work of Carl Rogers (1961). In the encounter groups, I had begun to learn to differentiate feelings in myself and in others and to listen to others in

a manner that valued their own potential for self-directedness. When I began to read Lonergan's major philosophical work, *Insight*, I discovered a philosophical approach that begins with the person engaged in the process of knowing and is directed towards self-understanding. Years later, I read a comment by Lonergan that he viewed his own approach to cognitional activity, whereby one attends to the operations of knowing, as paralleling Rogers's aim of enabling his clients to attend to, recognize, identify, name, and distinguish the feelings that they experience. Both Rogers and Lonergan focus on the conscious mind. While Rogers invites us to reflect on our feelings and learn to differentiate them, appropriate them and own them, Lonergan focuses on the operations of the process of knowing and doing. What I was learning from both of them was an attention to experience and a method of reflection which does not stop at introspection but drives towards meaning and value and ultimately action. As I moved into the field of action research, my earlier study of Lonergan's philosophical and theological work resonated with those action research writers who emphasize first person inquiry (e.g. Marshall, 1999, 2004; Schon, 1983; Torbert, 1991, 2001). It gave me greater confidence in my understanding and judgement. I draw on Lonergan's work, not so much as theory (though it does provide that), but as an affirmation of my inquiring, knowing, and acting.

The dynamic structure of human knowing

In the Introduction to *Insight* Lonergan adopts a first person inquiry approach, which he calls self-appropriation and states that his concern is not with the existence of knowledge or with what is known but with the structure of knowing and with the personal appropriation of the dynamic and recurrent operative structure of cognitional activity as a method of coming to terms with oneself as a knower. To appropriate means to take possession of or to make one's own (though it can mean to steal). Appropriating our intellectual activities means to become aware of them, be able to identify and distinguish them, to grasp how they are related, and to be able to make the process explicit. Lonergan says of *Insight*,

The present work is not to be read as though it described some distant region of the globe which the reader never visited, or some strange and mystical experience which the reader never shared. It is an account of knowledge. Though I cannot recall to each reader his personal experience, he can do so for himself and thereby pluck my general phrases from the dim world of thought to set them in the pulsing flow of life. (1992, p. 13)

Put simply, Lonergan is asking three questions. What am I doing when I am knowing? Why is that knowing? What do I know when I do that? Appropriation of our own knowing process does not happen in one single leap; it is a slow painstaking developmental process that is founded on our attention to the opera-

tions of knowing in the unfolding of our own experience. Lonergan is clear and assertive as to why this is important.

Thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments of understanding. (1992, p. 22)

Lonergan's assertion means that if I understand myself correctly, I can understand the structure of the universe correctly and not reduce the world to electro-chemical events as many scientists and neuro-biologists do, or reduce the world to what is known by physics, biology, psychology, sociology, or any of the empirical sciences; or be caught in a fundamentalism, or be seduced by slogans.

What is this 'fixed base, an invariant pattern'? In summary, Lonergan (1992; Flanagan, 1997; Stewart, 1996; Tekippe, 1996, 2003) presents the structure of knowing as a dynamic, heuristic three step process: experience, understanding, and judgement. First, I attend to my experience. Then I ask questions about my experience and receive an insight (understanding) and I follow that up by reflecting and weighing up the evidence to determine whether my insight fits the evidence (judgement). Lonergan is saying that what may be true or is real is what is affirmed by judgement. We may get lots of insights every day but without judgement, they remain mere insights. Judgement is where we say 'Yes', 'No', 'Maybe', or 'I don't know and need to find more evidence', in response to our insights. This pattern is invariant in that applies to all settings of cognitional activity, whether solving a crossword clue or Sudoku, working out whodunit in a detective story, solving an everyday problem or engaging in scientific research. To reject or dismiss this pattern involves experience, understanding, and judging and, paradoxically, confirms it.

Of course, we do not attend to all our experiences in the same way all the time. We may not be particularly observant or attentive to our feelings. We don't process insights systematically or explore alternative explanations of answers to what puzzles us. We may not weigh evidence with much thoroughness. As Torbert (2001) reminds us, we rarely remember to inquire into real-time actions and we often don't know what to do when we do remember. At whatever level we engage with life or particular moments of it, we enact operations of experiencing, understanding, and judging. What Lonergan is doing is showing us how an appropriation of how we engage with these operations opens up a vast field of learning about self and about to engage with the world. It affords a structure for us to know ourselves in a 'wondering and inquiring mindful way to our actions' (Torbert, 2001, p. 250).

Understanding my knowing process as a series of operations of experience, understanding and judgement provides a structure for me in enacting action research. I seek to attend to my experiences, both inner and outer, and inquire

into them. What inquiry reveals is an insight which leads to further inquiry, whereby I then weigh evidence and assess its sufficiency for me to make a judgement. Through this structure I can learn to be attentive and intelligent in my inquiry and so ground the inquiring and reflective processes that are integral to action research. Lonergan expresses it clearly for me. While he is talking about knowing he could easily be talking about action research.

. . . what we are dealing with is not just a set of static elements but a process. It is always a process *in us*; our knowing is always dynamic; we are always moving on to the next step. The pursuit of knowledge is the pursuit of an unknown. It is guided by an ideal, and the ideal changes and becomes more precise in the course of the pursuit. Consequently, what we have to do now is to grasp that dynamic aspect, and grasp it in a reflective fashion. We have to perform the activities and go through the routines that will bring to explicit consciousness the dynamic aspect of the process of knowing. (1990, p. 60)

Lonergan's articulation of cognitional structure provides a way of holding the extended epistemology with which action research works. Each of the four ways of knowing, presented by Heron (1996) – experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical – involve experience, understanding, and judgement, albeit differently in each mode of knowing. For instance, when Lonergan discusses the aesthetic pattern of experience he says,

the artist establishes his insights, not by proof or verification, but by skilfully embodying them in colours and shapes, in sounds and movements, in the unfolding situation and action of fiction. To the spontaneous joy of conscious living there is added the spontaneous joy of free intellectual creation. (1992, p. 208)

Lonergan is countering the notion that knowing is taking a look. He has a discomfort with a term like introspection, which suggests that self-knowledge is about taking an inner look. For Lonergan, all knowing involves experience, understanding and judging. In this sense his methodology is a critical realist approach that is contrasted with naive realism that equates knowing with seeing (Dunne, 2005). For Lonergan, subjectivity and objectivity are complementary, not opposed. It is a false notion to see the subjective as 'in here' and objective as 'out there'. For Lonergan, objectivity is knowing that there are others than myself and that I am not those others. So the context is of making judgements that distinguish between the knower and the known. Authentic subjectivity consists not in overcoming the particularities of my subjective viewpoint but in getting more deeply in touch with the unique particularity of my own perspective in order to better appreciate both the similarities with and differences from the standpoints of other individuals. Hence my judgements have to be critical as I expose my insights, judgements and decisions to critique.

. . . the many levels of consciousness are just successive stages in the unfolding of a single thrust, the eros of the human spirit. To know the good, it must know the real;

to know the real, it must know the true; to know the true, it must know the intelligible; to know the intelligible, it must attend to the data. So from slumber, we wake to attend. Observing lets intelligence be puzzled, and we inquire. Inquiry leads to the delight of insight, but insights are a dime a dozen, so critical reasonableness, doubts, checks, makes sure. Alternative courses of action present themselves and we wonder whether the merely attractive is truly good. Indeed, so intimate is the relation between successive transcendental notions, that it is only by a specialized differentiation of consciousness that we can withdraw from the more ordinary ways of living to devote ourselves to a moral pursuit of goodness, a philosophic pursuit of truth a scientific pursuit of understanding, an artistic pursuit of beauty. (Lonergan, 1972, p. 13)

In his later work Lonergan (1972) moved from the focus on insight to a focus on meaning, valuing, loving and acting. Going beyond knowing facts to making judgements of value and making decisions and acting, a similar process takes us through the same set of a) experiencing the situation; b) using sensitivity, imagination, and intelligence to answer the question for understanding as to what possible courses of action might be; c) reflecting on possible value judgements as to what the best option might be; and d) deciding to follow through on our considered judgement and being responsible for consistency between knowing and doing.

General empirical method

The cognitional operations of experience, understanding and judgement form a general empirical method, which requires:

- Attention to observable data
- Envisaging possible explanations of that data
- Preferring as probable or certain the explanations which provide the best account for the data.

These require the disposition to perform the operations of attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness.

Lonergan's approach in *Insight* is to encourage me to attend to how I know. He is inviting me to first person inquiry, which he calls self-appropriation. He consistently asks me to inquire of myself what I was doing, what was going on in my head. What was I thinking and feeling? Where did the thoughts and feelings come from? What experience got me thinking? Did my thinking come to a conclusion or resolution? Did I learn anything in the process of thinking? Am I sure I learned something? How do I know I am sure? What is the difference between the thoughts I was thinking and the feelings I experienced, and how were they related to one another? Did my feelings make me think something, or did my thoughts make me feel something? The search for understanding is intelligent, focusing on

a question or problem. While I might not know yet if a particular current search is intelligent, I anticipate intelligent answers. It is one thing to have an insight and quite another to state clearly just what it is I've understood. Insights reoccur and accumulate and so the habit of understanding develops. I'm continuously seeking to transform myself from a questioner to an 'understander' and coming to understand my activity of understanding. This is a process of learning.

Where is a good place to begin? While Torbert (2001) suggests that the practice of inquiring-in-action may begin from concerns to perform particular tasks more effectively, I have found that I have learned to appropriate the process of knowing by attending to what happens when I do crossword puzzles. I do a simple crossword in the daily paper. I look at the clue and the spaces and I start asking questions in my head. Then I get an insight (eventually!). I check that the insight fits with the blank spaces for the letters and the other words that cross it. Then I seek to verify; this may be the answer. Perhaps later, when I have completed other parts of the crossword, I find that I was not correct and I have another insight and then I verify that my new insight seems to fit better and I judge that it is correct. In an undergraduate course where I want the students to learn how to inquire into organizational dynamics from the perspective of being an insider as a temporary worker, I devote the first class to engaging in a series of arithmetic puzzles and crossword clues in order to invite and to challenge the students to begin to attend to how they experience, understand, weigh evidence, and judge.

Of course, the factual outcomes of arithmetic puzzles and crosswords where answers are right or wrong are not replicated when we try to know the world of human behaviour and social structures. This world is mediated by meaning which constitutes human living. We learn to construct our respective worlds by giving meaning to data that continuously impinge on us from within ourselves and as well as from without. Meaning goes beyond experiencing, as what is meant is not only experienced but is also something we seek to understand and to affirm. There is the task of seeking to understand the many meanings that constitute organizations and social structures, in language, in symbols, and in actions. Accordingly, we inquire into how values, behaviour, and assumptions are socially constructed and embedded in meaning, and what we seek to know emerges through emergent inquiry that attends to purposes and framing, that works actively with issues of power and multiple ways of knowing (Marshall & Reason, 2007). There is also the meaning of the world we make, through our enactment of the four territories of experience: through intentions, plans, actions, and outcomes (Reason & Torbert, 2001). So in terms of Lonergan's conscious intentionality, we enact operations of intending, planning, acting, and reviewing within ourselves as first person practice, with others as second person practice, and to influence a broader impersonal audience as third person practice.

I find that Lonergan has powerful resonances with Argyris's construct of action science and Torbert's construct of developmental action inquiry (Argyris,

2004; Torbert & Associates, 2004). Torbert emphasizes attentiveness or ‘noticing’ and suggests ways of developing awareness of physical, emotional, and mental activities that go on inside us, largely unbeknownst to us. Lonergan, Argyris, and Torbert challenge us to engage in self-reflection and to attend to the knowing on which we base our actions. All three place considerable emphasis on the process of inquiry, which for Lonergan is attending to the operations of knowing and doing and which for Argyris and Torbert involves testing inferences and attributions that guide our theory-in-use. What Argyris and Torbert are addressing is the operation of movement from insight to judgement. They fill in some of the detail that Lonergan does not address explicitly and provide ways of focusing on the distinction between what we infer/attribute and what we know. Both Lonergan and Torbert build on the scientific findings of Piaget that the development of intelligence in children occurs through an increasing differentiation of skills which allows the child to develop by constructing an increasingly differentiated world and developing forms of reasoning and relating to others. Torbert adds the developmental dynamic of learning to inquire-in-action, emphasizing that as we progress through adulthood we may intentionally develop new ‘action-logics’ through stages of development. Developmental theory offers an understanding of our transformation through a series of stages so that we gain insight into our own action logic as we take action.

Authenticity

I now turn to the notion of authenticity and explore how it may be grounded in Lonergan’s empirical method. There is no guarantee that I will attend to experience and the search for insight. I can be inattentive and miss or ignore data. I can distort data. I can fly from insight by turning a blind eye, by refusing to ask questions, by ignoring awkward or disconfirming questions and by not facing unresolved feelings. While the desire to know manifests itself in attentive questioning, so there are fears which block and divert this questioning: censoring, repressing, controlling symbols of feeling and imagining, selecting what I choose to question. I may engage in what Gendlin (1964) refers to as ‘process-skipping’, where I ‘skip the point at which [I] might complete, symbolize, respond or attend to that to which [I] centrally feel’ (p. 134). I can be unreasonable in my judgements, settling for what is comfortable rather than for what the questions evoke. I can resist the evidence and try to escape responsibility. Sometimes, I do these in ignorance; at other times I know I am being bull-headed, obstinate, or fearful. This is not a peculiar aberration but a frequent occurrence and I can be resourceful and inventive in how I flee from attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility. Hence for Lonergan (1972), authenticity is characterized by what he calls four ‘transcendental precepts’. Be attentive (to the data). Be intelligent (in

Table 1 Authenticity

<i>Operations</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Transcendental precepts</i>
Experience	Attending, sensing, imagining	Be attentive
Understanding	Inquiring, understanding,	Be intelligent
Judgement	Reflecting, weighing evidence, judging	Be reasonable
Decision	Deliberating, deciding, acting	Be responsible

inquiry). Be reasonable (in making judgements). Be responsible (in making decisions and taking action). They are transcendental in that they take us beyond egocentrism into collaboration and include ethics.

Loneragan's presentation of authenticity as characterized by the four transcendental precepts is aspirational and inspirational for the development of action researchers as skilled practitioner-researchers (Table 1). Authenticity is at the heart of being human as being human means to be experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding/acting. Lonergan's transcendental precepts are *imperative* in that they point to what 'ought' to be. We experience data so we ought to be open to experience, hence the imperative, *be attentive*. Avoiding issues, closing our eyes to reality, turning a blind eye, burying our heads in the sand, refusing to inquire into some matter and so on, diminish our human authenticity. We ask questions and seek answers, so we ought to question and wonder and seek to understand. Accordingly, the imperative is, *be intelligent*. Refusing to question or wonder, uncritically or sheepishly following the party line, suppressing curiosity and so on destroy authenticity. We wonder whether our ideas are correct so we ought to have sound reasons for what we hold to be true and base our judgements on evidence. So the imperative is, *be reasonable*. Suppressing discussion or dissent, lying about facts, obscuring evidence and so on destroy authenticity. We discern what we ought to do, so we ought to be sensitive to value and choose what we believe to be right. The imperative, therefore, is, *be responsible*. Cheating, destroying resources, being unjust and so on destroy authenticity. These four transcendental precepts determine the technical meaning of 'authenticity' for Lonergan.

I worked on an action research project of three years' duration whose objectives were to develop a business model to support the design, implementation, and ongoing development of collaborative improvement between partners in Extended Manufacturing Enterprises (EMEs), supported by a web-based software system, and action learning-based implementation guidelines (Coghlan & Coughlan, 2005). The project involved academics and managers from several European countries.

I remember one particular meeting of the partner group, a group of about 25 participants, comprising academic researchers, doctoral students, and managers of the participating companies. (This group met for two and a half days every four months

approximately over the duration of the project.) We had spent the previous day listening to reports from the three participating business networks and engaging in reflection on the actions that had taken place since the previous meeting and planning what would happen next. On the second day we stepped back from the details of action within each network and addressed progress on the research themes. One discussion was focused on the business model; that is, the intended articulation of a model of how networks engage in supply chain relationships. The discussion began in a vigorous manner with its constituent elements being explored in the light of the original design and of the experience of the networks in implementing the model. Whether the model was descriptive or prescriptive was a particular point of discussion.

As this discussion proceeded I felt the atmosphere in the room getting heavy and I thought that the quality of listening was deteriorating as the discussion seemed to be getting bogged down. I attended to this experience I was having, working within myself to find if it was me who was losing track of the conversation or whether there was something happening in the group. My insight was that it wasn't just me and I made a judgement that the discussion was indeed getting bogged down. I wondered what was going on that this might be taking place. As I attended to the discussion I had a further insight from what people were saying, which was that what seemed to be at issue was a variance between a view of the business model as a verification tool and a view of it as a discovery tool. As I listened further, searching to hear if there was evidence for this understanding, the project leader turned to me suddenly and said, 'David, what's going on in the group now?' I immediately felt under pressure. Were there ways of understanding the group process other than what I was inferring? Would I share my insight? If I did would I polarize the group as I would be pointing to some very fundamental differences among the academics as to what this research was about? I decided quickly that I would take responsibility for my judgement about epistemological differences and share it as an insight/hypothesis in order to open inquiry in the group. So I shared my judgement about how I understood how the discussion had proceeded and that I wondered if there were different epistemologies operating in the discussion, if those who saw the business model as a verification tool were expressing frustration that the networks were not enacting it sufficiently to verify it, while those who were working out of an action research mode were excited by the lack of enactment as it opened up inquiry as to what was really going on. I posed my question to the group as to whether my insight was accurate or not and what the members thought. This question opened up good discussions which carried on informally outside of the formal meetings. As these discussions unfolded the members of the project, both practitioners and academics from different academic fields and approaches to research struggled to come to terms with their understanding of the different research approaches within the academic partners and of the role action research was playing.

In subsequent reflection on my own learning from this incident, I frame my behaviour in terms of learning to be authentic. I had been attending to both the process of the meeting and to my own thoughts and feelings and was asking myself lots of questions. I was seeking intelligent answers to my questions about my own span of atten-

tion and the group process. I was engaging in inner inquiry and I received insights which I then worked to verify by further attentiveness and inquiry. I judged that my interpretation about the frustration in the group was reasonable; it appeared to fit the evidence from directly observed behaviour, though it had yet to be verified by the group. The crunch came when the project leader put me on the spot and I was challenged to take responsibility for my understanding and judgement. I could have avoided any possible hassle by providing an alternative response that possibly would have glossed over the issues as I understood them. I worked to share my insights in a manner that would open up group inquiry and exploration. Would that I do this all the time!

Seeking authenticity

Lonergan points out that we cannot take authenticity for granted. It is not a process of simply learning the transcendental precepts and implementing them in a mechanical manner. We live with the pull and counterpull of trying to be authentic. Lonergan refers to adopting a hermeneutic of suspicion. Don't accept anyone's word at face value. Question your own thoughts, feelings, and subjectivity. He also refers to adopting a hermeneutic of recovery, where through inquiry we can discern between what is authentic and inauthentic.

Human authenticity is not some pure quality, some serene freedom from all oversights, all misunderstandings, all mistakes, all sins. Rather it consists in a withdrawal from inauthenticity, and the withdrawal is never a permanent achievement. It is ever precarious, ever to be achieved afresh, ever in great part a matter of uncovering still more oversights, acknowledging still further failures to understand, correcting still more mistakes, repenting more and more deeply hidden sins. (1972, p. 252)

The four transcendental precepts are a description of the notion of authenticity and they provide a process of how we can seek to be authentic: being attentive to the data, being intelligent in inquiry, being reasonable in making judgements, and being responsible in making decisions and in taking moment-to-moment action. Lonergan consistently asks us to inquire of ourselves what we are doing and what is going on in our heads, such as, what is the evidence of your understanding? How have you come to understand in the way that you have and not in another? How do you know that your understanding fits the data? Argyris poses similar questions in a more focused way. What are my espoused theories and my theories-in-use and can I express them in a way that I can't squirm out of them? How can I become more aware of my skilled incompetence, how my reasoning functions to protect myself and how I become blind to my blindness? How do I cover up inconsistent messages that I produce, deny producing them and make that denial undiscussable and the undiscussability of the undiscussable itself undiscussable? Putnam (1991), one of Argyris's associates, suggests that

questions like ‘What prevents you from . . .?’ and ‘What have I said or done that leads you to believe that . . .?’ facilitate a focus on directly observable behaviour rather than on attribution, inference or privately held diagnosis. So I may ask myself, on what evidence am I forming a judgement about what is going on and what I choose to do. Is my insight an inference/attribution? Techniques from action science, such as the ladder of inference, the right/left hand column and treating facts as hypotheses provide valuable tools for testing consistency between the transcendental precepts. Torbert frames the process in terms of the four territories of experience and the types of speech that can shape a conversation. These types of speech, framing, illustrating, advocating, and inquiring challenge us to think out what we want to say (framing), provide an illustration, provide our own opinion (advocating) and then inquire in a manner that can enhance mutual inquiry.

As an aside, I post a cautionary note that while an individual may strive for personal authenticity within a culture (what Lonergan calls ‘minor authenticity’), the culture in which that person lives may itself be inauthentic (what Lonergan calls ‘major authenticity’) and be in need of transformation. An example would be the authentic Nazi. Accordingly, the notion of authenticity needs also to be explored on a more comprehensive level than that of the individual only. That, in many ways, is the function that PAR performs. But that exploration is a task for another day.

Conclusions

In this article I have explored the notion of authenticity, grounded in the work of the philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan who shapes and influences my practice of action research. Lonergan begins with the human subject and explores how we know by attending to the operations of knowing as a process of first person practice. One commentator, when asked what Lonergan is getting at in *Insight*, replied that Lonergan is getting at you! This framing of cognitional structure opens up ways of exploring first person inquiry by attending to our own experience, to understanding, to judging and to deciding/acting. In first person terms we are starting with ourselves and the dynamic structure of knowing. Attention to the invariant process of knowing forms the basis for attending to a) our own cognitive and acting operations (first person), b) working with other persons’ cognitive and acting operations (second person), and c) seeking to contribute to the wider community of knowledge and action (third person). A praxis-reflection methodology of attention to experience, understanding and judgement which leads to action, such as presented by Lonergan accords with well-established first and second person approaches within action research, such as presented by Argyris (2004), Coghlan and Brannick (2005), Heron (1996),

Marshall (1999, 2004), Scharmer (2007), Schon (1983), and Torbert and Associates (2004). It provides a frame for enabling practitioners to hone their skills in engaging with the opportunities and challenges of insider action research (Coghlan & Shani, 2008).

In describing how I understand authenticity as first person practice I have taken authenticity as congruent with my understanding and internalization of the structure of human knowing as articulated by Lonergan. Lonergan is a 'philosopher of consciousness' as Webb (1988) puts it and his emphasis on self-appropriation of how I am a knower provides a foundation and method for me to explore how I engage in action research. Lonergan invites us to recognize that there are four basic, unfolding, and interrelated operations that fit into a pattern that characterizes the human, namely, experience of data, the effort to understand them, the judgment after relating the insight back to the evidence of data, and a decision about what to do about it. In first person terms, we are starting with ourselves and the dynamic structure of knowing that is integral to being human. Once we understand how we know, we can transpose that dynamic operational structure into the basic, normative patterns of action research. Attention to experience, understanding and judgement which leads to action, provides an understanding by which we can affirm what and how we know.

This articulation of my engagement in first person practice in terms of Lonergan's empirical method accords with Marshall's (2001) presentation of the qualities of self-reflective practice, referred to at the outset. This is how I craft my own practice and attend to its quality through inner and outer arcs of attention, testing insights and affirming them when I judge that the insights fit the evidence of the data as experienced. I seek to be both active in attending and inquiring and receptive to the insights I receive. In being attentive to data, being intelligent in inquiry, being reasonable in making judgements and being responsible in making decisions and taking action, I seek to be personally authentic.

Lonergan's notion of authenticity provides a frame by which we both ground and assess our quest for authenticity as action researchers, as that struggle to engage in being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in engaging with the challenges of action research. Doubtless, authenticity may be framed in alternate terms, in frames of other approaches. See, for example, Braman's (2008) exploration of Lonergan's notion of authenticity in relation to Charles Taylor's. Torbert and Associates' (2004) notion of integrity, mutuality and sustainability is perhaps an equivalent term for authenticity. I have presented authenticity in Lonergan's terms because that is how I have adopted and internalized it. I offer my framing of authenticity to the action research community in order to both share my own approach so as to contribute to continuing inquiry into our understanding and practice of action research and to evoke articulations from other philosophical approaches so that the pluralism within action research may be enriched.

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David Coghlan is at the School of Business, Trinity College Dublin and is a Fellow of the College. He specializes in organization development and action research and is active in both communities internationally. He is currently on the editorial review boards of *Action Research*, the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *Action Learning: Research and Practice*, and the *Journal of Management Education*. His most recent book is *Organizational change and strategy* (with N. Rashford, Routledge, 2006) and he is currently working on a third edition of his popular *Doing action research in your own organization* (with T. Brannick, SAGE). Address: School of Business, Trinity College, University of Dublin, Dublin 2, Ireland. [Email: dcoghlan@tcd.ie]