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Review- Startling Strangeness: Reading Lonergan's Insight

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the modern believer who consequently abandons belief. L. intends to reformulate the Catholic faith for the secularized 21st century. He predicts that professional theologians will judge his ideas to be lacking nuance and failing to do justice to the complexity of the issues. Thus forewarned, theologians may be tempted to tolerate the unsubstantiated rhetoric with which he criticizes the Catholic tradition. They may even agree that in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* the medieval mentality endures. Nevertheless, professionals will also recognize that L. overlooks Vatican II reforms in his critique of sacraments and ecclesiology, and that he disregards 20th-century scholarship in his appraisal of trinitarian theology and Christology.

Professional theologians, however, are not the readers for whom L. writes, and he unfortunately neglects to provide the scholarly resources on which others can base informed judgments. Dismissing traditional Catholic discourse, L. observes that "Words are like coins: they have a fixed value in the society in which they circulate" (98). This is certainly true. Nonetheless, L. seems to ignore that both coins and words are symbols that, through excess of meaning and interpretative depth, allow for ongoing exchange as their societies themselves change. So neither coins nor words should be discarded without a more judicious assessment of their abiding worth.

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STARTLING STRANGENESS: READING LONERGAN'S *INSIGHT*. By Richard M. Liddy. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2007. Pp. xxii + 251. \$59.95; \$33.

Liddy tells the heartfelt and engaging story of his life-changing encounter with Bernard Lonergan's masterwork *Insight* in the mid-1960s while he was a young priest studying philosophy at the Gregorian University. Faced with an intellectual crisis that threatened to become a crisis of faith, on the advice of David Tracy and others, he began working his way through Lonergan's book. Initially

L. suspected that it would prove to be just another instance of outmoded Scholasticism. What he found was something far different: an invitation to discover, through the arduous process that Lonergan calls "the self-appropriation of one's own rational self-consciousness," a philosophically and existentially reliable basis for making sense of the world and of himself. L.'s response to that invitation is a case study that illustrates with remarkable clarity and concreteness what the task of self-appropriation entails.

Part 1 traces L.'s seminary formation, his experience of living through the exhilarating time of Vatican II, and his philosophical development up to the point when he decided to take up *Insight*. Part 2 recounts L.'s reading of the book. Each chapter provides judiciously chosen passages that expose *Insight's* basic structure and argument, and along the way L. indicates what his questions were, which parts of the text struck him as puzzling or illuminating, and how certain issues gradually came to occupy his attention. Part 3 describes how, despite reading and rereading the book, its full significance continued to elude him until, in an unexpected moment of "startling strangeness," he suddenly understood the meaning of Lonergan's statement that human knowing is fundamentally not similar to looking. That breakthrough left him "passionately committed to the truth and to the reality revealed by truth" (xx), including the reality of God.

This book could be especially useful for those who are considering reading *Insight*, who have started reading *Insight* but given up, or who, having read *Insight*, still wonder whether they have grasped what it is most fundamentally about.

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OFF THE MENU: ASIAN AND ASIAN NORTH AMERICAN WOMEN'S RELIGION AND THEOLOGY. Edited by Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007. Pp. xxi + 341. \$49.95.