The Metaphysics of Sex and Gender: Human Embodiment, Multiplicity, and Contingency

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Boston College

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Department of Philosophy

THE METAPHYSICS OF SEX AND GENDER:
HUMAN EMBODIMENT, MULTIPLICITY, AND CONTINGENCY

a dissertation

by

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Abstract

The Metaphysics of Sex and Gender:
Human Embodiment, Multiplicity, and Contingency

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This dissertation assesses the relevance and significance of Lonergan’s work to feminist philosophy.\footnote{Demonstrated by the contributors of essays to the volume on Lonergan and Feminism, including Cynthia Crysdale, Paulette Kidder, Michael Vertin, Elizabeth A. Morelli, and many others.} In particular, this work examines the debate between several contemporary feminist philosophers regarding the question of the relation between sex and gender, as well as their critiques of the Western metaphysical tradition. Ultimately, the trajectory of the work argues that Lonergan’s philosophy, in particular his re-envisioning of the meaning of what it is to do metaphysics, provides a unique and compelling response to the critiques made by feminist philosophers, despite the appearance of overt sexism in his writing. In fact, Lonergan’s approach clarifies the relevance of metaphysical thinking to feminist philosophical analysis.

The first chapter examines likely feminist criticisms of Lonergan’s philosophy, as well as points of commonality, particularly between Lonergan’s cognitional theory and various feminist epistemologies. In particular, this chapter undertakes an analysis of Lonergan’s notion of “the pure desire to know” which he claims is a primordial, normative human response to our experience of the universe of being.

Chapter Two focuses on the feminist debate regarding the “sex/gender” distinction. This chapter examines the analyses of sex and gender by four prominent
feminist philosophers, Luce Irigaray, Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens, and Judith Butler, and their critiques of the Western metaphysical tradition.

Chapter Three explicates Lonergan’s cognitional theory, as well as his analysis of four patterns of experience – the biological, aesthetic, intellectual and dramatic. In addition, the notion of “neural demands” developed by Lonergan is discussed, as well as the connection between “neural demand functions” and patterns of experience.

Chapter Four is dedicated to an exploration of the complexity of Lonergan’s approach to metaphysics. The chapter begins with Lonergan’s notion of being, and moves on to explore his notions of finality, emergent probability and objectivity. I turn next to a discussion of Lonergan’s revision of the traditional metaphysical vocabulary of potency, form, and act. This is followed by an examination of Lonergan’s understanding of the relationship between metaphysics and development, as well as dialectic.

Chapter Five elaborates a dialectical exchange between Lonergan’s philosophy and the philosophy of Irigaray, Grosz, Butler, and Gatens. In addition, this chapter articulates Lonergan’s notion of anti-essentialism, and argues that his unmistakably clear rejection of essentialism supports the repudiation of the idea that human natures are fixed and determined by biological sex. In addition, Chapter Five explores the metaphysical and ethical significance of classical and statistical law, as well as the relationship between metaphysics and ethics as it pertains to feminist philosophy.
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Introduction

Why have there been no major treatises concerning feminist metaphysics? It appears that many feminist philosophers have given up on metaphysics. Have they assumed that metaphysics is a fruitless and outmoded philosophical approach to forwarding feminist aims? If so, then their conclusions would seem justified considering that the female sex has been discounted by Western metaphysics. The contributions of the relatively few women who braved the halls of philosophical discourse prior to the twentieth century remain, for the most part, extra-canonical. Why is this?

Feminists have argued persuasively that the history of the subordination of the female sex, created through the enculturation of the practice of sexism and patriarchal dominance, predates the history of Western metaphysics. In *The Creation of Patriarchy*, historian Gerda Lerner argues that patriarchal systems emerged over the course of several millennia. Lerner claims “The period of the ‘establishment of patriarchy’ was not one ‘event’ but a process developing over a period of nearly 2500 years, from app. 3100 to 600 B.C. It occurred, even within the Ancient Near East, at a different pace and at different times in several distinct societies.”

Significantly, the emergence of Western philosophy and metaphysics can be traced to the period from the fourth through sixth centuries B.C., at which time Lerner claims patriarchal systems had been fully established, according to Lerner. While the pre-Socratic schools such as the Ionian and Eliatic begin in the sixth century B.C., Plato

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and Aristotle, the patriarchs of Western metaphysics, were born in 428\(^3\) and 384 B.C.,
respectively.\(^4\)

By comparison, in the twenty-first century, the history of feminist philosophy is barely in its infancy. The stimulus for feminist philosophy is largely the insight that Western philosophy, in particular,\(^5\) developed within a civilization shaped through the deep and abiding group bias of sexism. Feminist philosophers, therefore, criticize the overtly sexist comments made by male philosophers through the ages, for example Aristotle’s claim “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior,”\(^6\) and Aquinas’ assertion, “For good order would have been wanting in the family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates.”\(^7\) More deeply, feminist philosophers are concerned that claims about the possibility of objective and universal analysis exclude women altogether. In particular, feminist philosophers argue that claims about truth, justice, reason, and beauty, as well as about the universality

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\(^3\) The exact date of Plato’s birth is debated, but is thought to have been between 428 or 427 B.C. (the historical record is uncertain).


\(^5\) While patriarchy is a world-wide phenomenon and effects Western as well as Non-Western philosophies, this analysis will focus exclusively on Western philosophy.


For a very careful reading of Aristotle’s claims about the female in his biological writings, see Robert Mayhew, The Female In Aristotle’s Biology: Reason or Rationalization. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Mayhew argues that a careful contextual reading of many of Aristotle’s biological claims about the female reveal that while Aristotle was motivated by ideological bias in some of his conclusions about women and their biology, especially with regards to cognitional ability, many of his claims are also taken out of context and oversimplified. See in particular chapter 4 “Eunuchs and Women” for a fascinating reading of Aristotle’s oft-quoted claim that “the female is as it were a mutilated male.” Aristotle. The Generation of Animals 737 a27 as quoted and translated by Mayhew, 54.

\(^7\) Aquinas, Summa Theologica I, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), qu. 92, art. 1, ad 2, 489.
of the human subject, have been constructed from a male point of view, largely because women were excluded from the realm of rationality by male philosophers.

Feminist philosophers are particularly opposed to the foundational claims made by traditional Western philosophy. As generally understood, “traditional” Western metaphysics has a 2500 year history. It has progressed from the ancient Greeks, through the philosophers of the early middle ages practiced by thinkers such as Plotinus, Boethius, Augustine, and Anselm to the rediscovery of Aristotle’s metaphysics in the late middle ages that fuels the prominence of scholasticism as demonstrated by Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, Suárez, and others.

During the modern period, the methods and many of the conclusions of scholastic metaphysics were rejected, amid lively disagreement about the value of practicing metaphysics as an abstract theoretical enterprise. Descartes argues that metaphysical certainty can be reached not through experience but through reason alone. Empiricists such as Locke and Hume claim that human knowledge and our possession of metaphysical certainty is limited by empirical experience. Kant rejects the absolutism of both of these points of view, proposing instead an idealism that aims to rethink the nature and limits of human knowledge, as well as restructure philosophical understanding about the kinds of metaphysical questions that can even be answered.

Following Kant, Hegel understood reality in a monistic fashion, asserting that the only truly substantial entity is Spirit (Geist). Hegel’s absolute idealism rekindled the tradition of speculative metaphysics in a sweepingly systematic way. Although Hegel’s idealism has been attacked by scathing critics of the Western metaphysical tradition such
as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, the legacy of the idealism of Kant and Hegel persists through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Feminists object to many features of Western philosophy and metaphysics, specifically, the dichotomy between universality and particularity (which many feminists argue leads to a fundamentally dualistic approach to understanding reality), varieties of essentialism, as well as a tendency to think in terms of hierarchy which inflames the problem of dualism. All of these issues implicate the philosophers previously discussed, as well as their historical counterparts, to varying degrees.

Like feminist philosophers, many twentieth and twenty-first century philosophers (of all sexes) whose work is not explicitly feminist, also criticize the metaphysical tradition. Even though they share this critical stance with feminist thinkers, this does not mean that they have been spared from feminist criticism. Feminist criticism of the critics is frequently a complicated affair, for often feminists are indebted to the work of the canonical figures that they criticize, yet are dissatisfied with the full scope of their work. For example, although phenomenological analysis has proved useful for many feminist philosophers, Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology is questioned for its idealistic revival of Cartesianism, as well as a failure to fully investigate corporeality in all of its aspects. Again, Martin Heidegger criticizes Husserl’s idealism, insisting instead on a phenomenological method that arises out of the *Destruction* of the Western metaphysical tradition to allow for a concrete revealing of the meaning of Being. With his analysis of Dasein, Heidegger revolutionizes the thinking of subjectivity. Yet he too is still criticized

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by some feminists for his failure to account for sexual difference in his account of Dasein.9

Jacques Derrida’s work is indebted both to Husserl and Heidegger, among others. At times considered a feminist himself,10 Derrida develops a deconstructive approach to reading (inspired by Heidegger) and a notion of différance which is intriguing to many feminist scholars for its ability to disrupt traditional philosophical approaches.11 Yet many feminists are suspicious and even hostile towards the kind of ‘post-modernism’ found in Derrida’s writings because it is used to undermine notions of truth and value that are considered important to feminist work.12 A contemporary of Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, critiques the phenomenological tradition, particularly Heidegger, for failing to recognize the danger of enveloping the subject within a veil of solipsism. Levinas is praised by feminist thinkers for undertaking a serious consideration of the alterity of our experience of other persons, as well as the ethical dimension of that experience. Feminist philosophers, Simone de Beauvoir in particular, insist on the importance of the analysis of alterity, and yet criticize Levinas’ failure to recognize the particularity of the feminine other.13 Critiquing the phenomenological tradition from a unique point of view, Michel

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9 See, for example, Katrin Froese “Woman's Eclipse: The Silenced Feminine in Nietzsche and Heidegger” Philosophy & Social Criticism, (2005), 31(2), 165 –184.
10 See, for example, an interview between Christine McDonald and Jacques Derrida, “Choreographies” in Nancy C. Holland (ed.), Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 23-42.
Foucault’s analysis of power relations and human sexuality inspires feminist critiques of power and gender relations. Yet Foucault’s masculine bias is often called to task.\textsuperscript{14}

Indeed, while feminist philosophers often disagree about definitions of feminism itself, as well as appropriate goals and methodologies for feminist theory, much time has been devoted by feminist philosophers debating the weaknesses and merits of these major twentieth century thinkers. Conversely, a significant but relatively small body of work is emerging relating feminist critique to the work of twentieth century philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan.\textsuperscript{15} Lonergan’s work has a broad, interdisciplinary appeal, so the existing corpus of feminist analysis focusing on Lonergan’s work addresses issues beyond exclusively philosophical concerns.

This dissertation assesses the relevance and significance of Lonergan’s work to feminist philosophy.\textsuperscript{16} In particular, this work examines the debate between several contemporary feminist philosophers regarding the question of the relation between sex and gender, as well as their critiques of the Western metaphysical tradition. Ultimately, this work argues that Lonergan’s philosophy, in particular his re-envisioning of the meaning of what it is to do metaphysics, provides a unique and compelling response to the critiques made by feminist philosophers, despite the appearance of overt sexism in his

\textsuperscript{14} See, for example, Margaret A. McLaren, \textit{Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity} (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).
\textsuperscript{15} See, for example, Cynthia S.W. Crystdale (ed.), \textit{Lonergan and Feminism} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Cynthia S.W. Crystdale, \textit{Embracing Travail: Retrieving the Cross Today} (New York: Continuum, 1999); as well as the work of Christine Jamieson on Lonergan and Kristeva, and Prudence Allen’s work on Lonergan, Aristotle, and Feminism.
\textsuperscript{16} Demonstrated by the contributors of essays to the volume on \textit{Lonergan and Feminism}, including Cynthia Crystdale, Paulette Kidder, Michael Vertin, Elizabeth A. Morelli, and many others.
writing. In fact, Lonergan’s approach clarifies the relevance of metaphysical thinking to feminist philosophical analysis.

In Chapter One I examine Lonergan’s cognitional theory in relation to various feminist epistemologies. This chapter undertakes an analysis of Lonergan’s notion of “the pure desire to know,” which he claims is a primordial, normative human response to our experience of the universe of being. I explore potential feminist criticisms of Lonergan’s cognitional theory, as well as points of commonality.

Chapter Two focuses on the feminist debate regarding the “sex/gender” distinction. This chapter examines the analyses of sex and gender by four prominent feminist philosophers, Luce Irigaray, Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens, and Judith Butler, and their critiques of the Western metaphysical tradition.

In Chapter Three I further explicate Lonergan’s cognitional theory, as well as his analysis of four patterns of experience: the biological, aesthetic, intellectual and dramatic. In addition, I examine his notion of “neural demands,” as well as the connection between “neural demand functions” and patterns of experience.

Chapter Four is dedicated to an exploration of the complexity of Lonergan’s approach to metaphysics. Beginning with Lonergan’s notion of being, I then discuss his notions of finality, emergent probability, and objectivity. I turn next to a discussion of Lonergan’s revision of the traditional metaphysical vocabulary of potency, form, and act. This is followed by an examination of Lonergan’s understanding of the relationship between metaphysics and development, as well as dialectic. These topics are particularly important for this dissertation because it is Lonergan’s account of a dynamic metaphysics
which best articulates a philosophical position that addresses the concerns about
traditional metaphysics raised by the feminist authors examined in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five elaborates a dialectical exchange between Lonergan’s philosophy
and the philosophy of Irigaray, Grosz, Butler, and Gatens. In addition, this chapter
articulates Lonergan’s notion of anti-essentialism, and argues that his unmistakably clear
rejection of essentialism supports the repudiation of the idea that human natures are fixed
and determined by biological sex. In addition, Chapter Five explores the metaphysical
and ethical significance of classical and statistical laws, as well as the relationship
between metaphysics and ethics as it pertains to feminist philosophy.
Chapter One:
Feminism, Epistemology, and Pure Question:
Examining Lonergan’s Pure Desire to Know

I. Introduction

Bernard Lonergan’s masterwork *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* attempts to reveal the inner workings of human conscious-intentionality. At the core of the work is an analysis of the phenomenon of insight, which Lonergan describes as a “supervening act of understanding.”¹⁷ Lonergan’s approach is systematic, and his modest attempt to convey an insight into insight rolls along like a snowball gathering mass. According to Lonergan’s own preface to his work, this yields “a philosophy that is at once methodical, critical and comprehensive,”¹⁸ which implies a verifiable metaphysics, as well as “insight into the principal devices of the flight from understanding.”¹⁹ He claims this philosophy pertains to everyone, from the simplest mind to the most brilliant philosophical genius. This is only the beginning of what Lonergan claims to accomplish.

Many feminist philosophers are suspicious of systematic philosophizing.²⁰ They suspect that sweeping claims about the universality and neutrality of “human” reason, are in fact false and only representative of male views about masculine capabilities. Susan Bordo, for example, comments on philosophical metanarratives arising out of the propertied, white, male, Western intellectual tradition. That tradition, we should remember, reigned for thousands of years.

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¹⁸ Ibid., xiii.
¹⁹ Ibid., xii.
²⁰ For Lonergan, systematic thinking must express the emerging dynamism of the universe of being – he speaks of system as “system on the move,” while the sort of systematic thinking that feminists fear is static, monolithic, totalitarian.

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and was able to produce powerful works of philosophy, literature, art, and religion before its hegemony began to be dismantled under great protest. Feminists such as Bordo would likely doubt that there would be much of value in Lonergan’s overarchingly systematic work that could further feminist aims.

However, close examination of Lonergan’s philosophy reveals that his approach is surprisingly compatible with feminist goals and methodology. In fact, Lonergan’s reflections on method could be applied profitably to feminist philosophy and make feminist methods more able.

In particular, Lonergan thinks about understanding in a unique manner, beginning with a concrete examination of cognitional process which yields insight into the process of experiencing and inquiring about data, and eventually into the phenomenon of the experience of insight itself – the “aha!” moment that we associate with understanding. Lonergan begins his philosophical enterprise with these concrete questions about knowing, which he claims arise from our “pure desire” to know and understand the full universe of being. He argues that this pure desire is normative for human experience.

II. Feminist Epistemologies

One strand of philosophical thinking that examines similar questions is the fairly new field of feminist epistemology. While feminist theorists resist any singular universalizing of the field – a recent text edited by Linda Alcoff and Linda Potter

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addresses “Feminist Epistemologies” — it is fair to say that, generally, approaches to feminist epistemology question the assumption that “a general account of knowledge, one that uncovers justificatory standards a priori, is possible.” Feminist critiques focus on the context of epistemological theories, with a healthy skepticism about any general or universal account of knowledge that “ignores the social context and status of knowers.”

While not all feminists agree on a singular epistemological critique, they share as a source of motivation the belief that traditional philosophy has long held commitments that challenge and undermine the knowledge claims made by women. As a result, feminists offer varying epistemological analyses, but share a “determination to reconstruct epistemology on a newer, more self-conscious ground.”

Many feminists resist the notion of privileging a woman-centered knowledge, often described as ‘women’s ways of knowing,’ ‘women’s intuition,’ or knowledge based in ‘women’s experience’. These approaches are regarded as problematic because they universalize real and significant differences between women, such as those of class, race, ethnicity, or culture, and lead to an essentializing of women’s experience. Alcoff and Potter note, however, that “If the concept ‘woman’ has lost its analytical credibility, the concept of a universal human nature is even less credible. Yet it is the latter concept that

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22 My emphasis.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 2.
26 Ibid., 3.
allows mainstream epistemologies to ignore the specificity of the knowing subject.”

Feminist epistemologist Lorraine Code argues that the subjectivity of the knower is significant and must be taken into account. She “argues that mainstream epistemology creates the illusion of a universal subject through the excision of ‘unacceptable’ points of view.”

Alcoff and Potter claim that the alliance between feminism and philosophy is an uneasy one, because of a “contradictory pull between the concrete and the universal.”

Feminists have long embraced the notion that “the personal is political” and feminist epistemology generally “supports the hypothesis that politics intersect traditional epistemology.” Feminist epistemology does not attempt to reduce epistemology to politics, but to argue that that there are political elements to knowledge which reflect the concerns of real, concrete human living. From this claim follows the notion that in order “to be adequate, an epistemology must attend to the complex ways in which social values influence knowledge, including the discernible social and political implications of its own analysis.”

This work argues that Lonergan’s account of cognitional theory and metaphysics, which is reflective of his claims about the pure desire to know, is in accord with feminist

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28 Alcoff and Potter, Feminist Epistemologies, 4.
29 Ibid., 6.
30 Ibid., 1.
31 The origin of this phrase is contested among scholars of women’s studies. Specifically, the question of whether the phrase arose out of an earlier movement or text and was later adopted by feminists is debated. There does seem to be agreement, however, that the phrase was popularized within the feminist movement by Carol Hanisch in her essay titled “The Personal is Political” in Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt, eds. Notes from the Second Year: Women’s Liberation, Major Writings of the Radical Feminists (New York: Self-published by the Editors, 1970).
33 Ibid.
insights about the social aspects of knowing. Indeed, it will be shown that Lonergan
gives an account of human knowing that does not commit the error of falsely
universalizing a limited, biased, masculinist (or feminist) account of knowledge. Rather,
Lonergan’s examination of the notion of the pure desire to know takes seriously the
question of the context of the act of knowing, as well as the meaning of difference that is
so essential to feminist theorizing. For Lonergan, the pure desire to know is always
manifest in a particular person under particular social, historical, and material conditions.
As a result, there is an important distinction to be made between the universal
unrestrictedness of the desire to know and its universal structural pattern, versus the
highly particularized manifestation of what it is doing right now, and how it unfolds in a
particular knower’s questions about the meaning of being.

III. Pure Question

According to Lonergan’s philosophy, being is not manifest but rather is only
anticipated in concrete questions for intelligence and reflection. This means that being is
hidden. Being is not manifest, it is not given, it is not a phenomenon. Its hiddenness is
what makes possible a desire for being. As Lonergan puts it,

Being, then, is the objective of the pure desire to know.

By the desire to know is meant the dynamic orientation manifested in
questions for intelligence and for reflection. It is not the verbal utterance of
questions. It is not the conceptual formulation of questions. It is not any insight
or thought. It is not any reflective grasp or judgment. It is the prior and
enveloping drive that carries cognitional process from sense and imagination to
understanding, from understanding to judgment, from judgment to the complete
context of correct judgments that is named knowledge. The desire to know, then, is simply the inquiring critical spirit of man.\textsuperscript{34}

It is not only Lonergan’s approach to being that is indirect; even his approach to the pure desire is indirect. The desire to know is neither immediate nor implicit. Rather, it is the horizon that makes it possible for questions to appear or emerge. The pure desire is not manifest, it is not a phenomenon. The phenomenon is instead the question.

In order to explore this possibility, this work will examine Lonergan’s underlying claims about the nature of human knowledge. These claims are grounded in an understanding of the drive or desire for understanding that Lonergan contends is normative for all human rationality. Further, I will consider whether feminists might be correct in criticizing Lonergan’s account of the human desire for understanding, or the “pure desire to know,” as pervasively masculine and representative of a patriarchal viewpoint.

Lonergan describes the experience of the pure desire to know:

Deep within us all, emergent when the noise of other appetites is stilled, there is a drive to know, to understand, to see why, to discover the reason, to find the cause, to explain. Just what is wanted has many names. In what precisely it consists, is a matter of dispute. But the fact of inquiry is beyond all doubt. It can absorb a man. It can keep him for hours, day after day, year after year, in the narrow prison of his study or laboratory. It can send him on dangerous voyages of exploration. It can withdraw him from other interests, other pursuits, other pleasures, other achievements. It can fill his waking thoughts, hide him from the world of ordinary affairs, invade the very fabric of his dreams. It can demand endless sacrifices that are made without regret though there is only the hope, never a certain promise, of success.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 348.
\textsuperscript{35} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 4.
While writing *Insight* in the 1940’s and 50’s, Lonergan used what today is considered sexist, masculine language to describe the human subject. Through the efforts of feminist scholarship, this language is now rightly considered unacceptable as grammatical standard, but in this case there are compelling philosophical reasons to look beyond it. I have found that his description does ring true and provides a genuine account of my own experience of knowing. In addition, Lonergan’s account has also been discussed by other female scholars, notably Cynthia Crysdale, Elizabeth A. Morelli and Beth Beshear.

**IV. Lonergan and Notions of Desire**

Cynthia Crysdale, a feminist theologian and scholar of Lonergan’s work, finds Lonergan’s notion of desire to resonate with feminist concerns. In her book *Embracing Travail* she examines the damaging effects of patriarchy, colonialism, and racism, the role of the Christian tradition in perpetuating these social systems, and the possibility of the authentic transformation of these and other modes of oppression and victimization. Despite the human manufacture of such systems of inequality, she claims, “As humans we are oriented to the ultimate, the reach of our questions and desires is unfathomable.”36 According to Crysdale this orientation is shaped by a deep desire shared by human beings, male and female alike. She notes

> Earlier I discussed the touching of our deepest Desire, a Desire and a touch that can carry us beyond ourselves, to horizons we would never have otherwise imagined. This grace can occur with regard to specific choices in concrete circumstances. It can also involve the general stirring up of Desire that grants us antecedent willingness. In this case we are moved in a deep and perduring way.37

36 Crysdale. *Embracing Travail*, 133.
37 Ibid., 132.
For Crysdale there is nothing masculine or distorted about this experience of desire. Rather, this deep experience of desire, when fulfilled through a process of inquiry and understanding, orients us away from the bias and narrow-mindedness that drives systems of oppression, such as sexism and racism. She notes “The deep longing to be a whole human person … is often truncated, both by our own sabotage and by the actions of others. Our socialization into fear of others and accommodation to their needs damage this deepest desire, which is a yearning to be a whole Self,” and yet “A taste of fulfillment of this deep Desire stirs up power, courage, deeper yearnings, willingness to pursue fulfillment of Self at all costs. Hunger overtakes fear.”

It is this phenomenon of desire, explored by Lonergan and Crysdale, that we must attempt to understand.

In her article, “The Problem of Desire in Human Knowing and Living,” Beshear examines the notion of desire in Lonergan’s philosophy. She contrasts this with other philosophical and theological accounts of desire. She argues that Lonergan’s positions on desire seem at first glance to be contradictory, for desire seems to be “both requisite for and inimical to ethical living.” She resolves this seeming contradiction by noting that Lonergan differentiates between several different types of desire that shape the human cognitional process. Beshear notes that the primary form of desire, the ‘pure desire to know,’ “orders the other kinds of desire to ethical ends, unless ‘spontaneous desires and fears’ intervene.”

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38 Ibid., 35.
40 Ibid., 155.
41 Ibid., 156.
Beshear argues that Lonergan’s approach to desire is somewhat Platonic, with the aim of bringing the passions under the control of reason. Lonergan differs from Plato, however, in his account of reason. She claims that for Lonergan, “reason itself is the unfolding of the detached and disinterested desire to know.”42 Beshear points out that this association of desire with disinterestedness seems paradoxical, yet for Lonergan both desire and disinterest are associated with the questions that emerge from the dynamic orientation of human consciousness. These questions emerge “when the noise of other appetites are stilled.”43 The disinterestedness of Lonergan’s pure desire to know seems less paradoxical when one recognizes that the pure desire is a special kind of desire. As Lonergan notes “For the pure desire not only desires; it desires intelligently and reasonably; it desires to understand because it is intelligent and it desires to grasp the unconditioned because it desires to be reasonable.”44 As such, the pure desire to know “pulls man out of the solid routine of perception and conation, instinct and habit, doing and enjoying”.45 Rather than accommodating the other to one’s own interests, settled positions, and habits, the pure desire to know draws the subject out toward the otherness of the not yet known. In light of this orientation toward reason and away from routine, it is not incomprehensible that the pure desire acts in a disinterested fashion.46

While the pure desire differs from other desires, it is similar in that it demands satisfaction of its aims. The aim of the pure desire to know is to answer the basic question ‘is it so?’ Or, to ask the question differently, are the conditions fulfilled that

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., as quoting Lonergan.
44 Insight, 380.
45 Ibid.
46 Beshear, 156-157, paraphrasing Lonergan
were sought after by the original question or inquiry made by the knower? The pure
desire to know draws the inquirer toward what Lonergan calls the “virtually
unconditioned.”47 He states that “To grasp evidence as sufficient for a prospective
judgment is to grasp the prospective judgment as virtually unconditioned.”48 Beshear
points out that, for Lonergan, the virtually unconditioned is “independent of the
individual’s likes and dislikes, of his wishful and anxious thinking.”49 Rather, reaching
the unconditioned is a product of the detached and disinterested orientation of the pure
desire to know.

Beshear emphasizes that the nature of the pure desire to know is unrestricted.
This unrestrictedness is derived not from the knower herself, but from the unrestricted
nature of the totality of being. According to Beshear, “the pure desire to know
anticipates the all-inclusive nature of being … the pure desire … does not cease upon the
answering of a single question, but rather [anticipates] that one answer may give rise to a
whole new set of questions of equal or greater urgency.”50 In addition to having an
unrestricted orientation, the pure desire differs from other desires because it lacks a
specific content. Rather than seek some singular fulfillment, the pure desire is an
anticipatory orientation lacking content. Beshear comments “it does not know what that
content [toward which it aims] will be, but only the form of that content, which is the
virtually unconditioned.”51 The method for achieving a virtually unconditioned judgment
involves following the cognitional process through experiencing, asking questions,

47 *Insight*, 280.
48 Ibid.
49 Beshear, 157, as quoting Lonergan.
50 Beshear, 157.
51 Ibid., 158.
enjoying the “Eureka!” of understanding only to give way once again to asking if that understanding is really so, reaching the virtually unconditioned, and finally affirming or denying the concreteness of one’s understanding.

Beshear mentions, however, that we might inquire about the norms for objectivity that allow the knower to affirm or deny the truth of a judgment. She notes that Lonergan is strongly anti-empiricist insofar as he “locates the norms for objectivity in the pure desire to know – in authentic subjectivity.”52 But what does this mean, to locate such norms within the pure desire to know? She claims that Lonergan draws a sharp distinction between the empiricist tendency to reduce the object of knowing to the object of experience, and the pure desire’s search for “an object not found in experience but reached through the grasping of a virtually unconditioned by the answering of all further relevant questions.”53 Yet the very notion that normativity comes from a pure desire rather than from empiricist solidity is a source of anxiety. Humans suppress this anxiety by recoiling from the pure desire. Lonergan comments that there is a tension natural to man, between extroversion and objectivity. For man observes, understands, and judges, but he fancies that what he knows in judgment is not known in judgment and does not suppose an exercise of understanding but simply is attained by taking a good look at the ‘real’ that is ‘already out there now’… empiricism as a method rests on an elementary confusion. What is obvious in knowing is, indeed, looking. Compared to looking, insight is obscure, and grasp of the unconditioned is doubly obscure. But empiricism amounts to the assumption that what is obvious in knowing is what knowing obviously is. This assumption is false.54

52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Insight, 412-416.
Indeed, the pure desire to know counters such empiricist assumptions by providing the knower with an unrestricted orientation, and by unbalancing our competing desires by asserting a detached and disinterested focus on questions for reflection and intelligence. As Beshear notes, “The pure desire to know sets up even the norms for questioning, so that no part of the cognitional process escapes its demands.”

While the pure desire unbalances our competing desires, it does not quash those other desires. Beshear argues that Lonergan’s account “lends clarity” to the “philosophical and ascetic traditions that call for the rule of reason over the passions.” Lonergan’s aim is not to denigrate or cast suspicion upon bodily, sensible or psychic desires. Lonergan’s approach is unlike Plato’s tendency to denigrate physical hungers, or Descartes’ need to validate his rational affirmation, “cogito, ergo sum,” apart from any sensate, bodily experience. Instead, Lonergan takes pains to develop an account of ways that passionate attachment can manifest in psycho-social bias, which “impairs cognitional process by interfering with the proper unfolding of the detached and disinterested desire to know.” Thus, for Lonergan, the source of rational impairment is not physical, or neural, but rather psychic and intellectual – at least insofar as psychic and intellectual realities cause intellectual failure through the dominance of biased self-interest over the engagement of the pure desire to know. Beshear observes that “individual bias limits the detachment and disinterestedness of cognitional process to personal problem solving and excludes further relevant questions.” The goal for cognitional liberation would then be

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55 Beshear, 158-159.
56 Ibid., 159.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
to free the pure desire from the effects of bias in order to allow it to guide our orientation, rather than the self-serving egoism which cuts us off from the unrestrictedness of being toward which the pure desire aims.

Rather than denigrate the material in a Platonic fashion, or uphold a Cartesian dualistic vision of human existence, Lonergan “affirms the unity and complementarity of the material and spiritual elements in the human.”\(^5^9\) He argues that spiritual intelligibility corresponds with the act of understanding sought by the pure desire, while material intelligibility corresponds with what is understood by intelligence. While the material is constituted by prime potency, the spiritual is neither constituted nor conditioned by prime potency. In fact, Lonergan concludes that “man’s central form seems to be the point of transition from the material to the spiritual.”\(^6^0\) This is a significant claim, because it means that the spiritual, intelligent existence of the human being is intrinsically joined to, and therefore in no way denigrates, the material reality of human existence. This does not mean that material and spiritual reality are equivalent. Lonergan claims that “material reality cannot perform the role or function of spiritual reality, but spiritual reality can perform the role and function of material reality.”\(^6^1\) This is because spiritual reality is comprehensive, insofar as the pure desire is drawn towards the entire universe of being through the act of knowing. Thus, it can “provide the center and ground of unity in the material conjugates”\(^6^2\) of a single human being.

\(^{60}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 519.
Beshear concludes that while the pure desire to know directs the cognitional process, this does not equate to a dualistic assertion of “mind over body, or spirit over matter, for matter and spirit coexist in an intelligible unity.” She also rejects any “postmodern” interpretation of Lonergan’s call for the pure desire to know to direct human living that would regard it as a manifestation of “the calculating, willful reason of modernity.” She says that such an exercise of reason would instead be a manifestation of bias interfering with the pure desire to know, not the orientation of the pure desire itself. Rather than calculating or willful, the pure desire is spontaneous. However, human beings must freely choose to live in accord with this spontaneity, and accept a “form of willingness that aids and supports and reinforces the pure desire.” It is important to emphasize, however, that the contrary choice is equally free and possible, for one can freely choose to refuse this open orientation.

While the pure desire is spontaneous, detached, and disinterested it is not in any way disconnected from human living. Indeed, the pure desire is intimately connected to human affairs through the human will. As Beshear observes “The will is … an extension of the detached and disinterested desire into the realm of possibility” and through the will the pure desire “explores concrete possibilities for human living.” The will and the intellect are also connected through Lonergan’s tripartite analysis of the human good. Beshear nicely summarizes the relationship between the pure desire to know and the structure of the good, “The detached and disinterested desire, then, has everything to do

63 Beshear, 161.
64 Ibid.
66 Beshear, 161.
with human living, for it brings humans to an awareness of particular needs and wants, to a recognition of a possible ordering of those wants, and an identification of differing values among orders.\textsuperscript{68} It is this relationship that constitutes for Lonergan a moral imperative that is an extension of the pure desire to know.

The pure desire is related to the will, but remains detached insofar as it maintains an unrelenting pursuit of the virtually unconditioned so long as it is not misdirected and crippled by bias. As Beshear notes, “the word ‘pure’ connotes this aspect of intellectual eros, because of which [the pure desire] seeks not just universals, but a concrete content, and not just any content, but a correct content.”\textsuperscript{69} The pure desire orients both human knowing and human choosing, and demands correct understanding and wise judgment in both.

This does not mean, however, that every human being actually lives up to those demands. Lonergan notes that

Against the self-affirmation of a consciousness that at once is empirical, intellectual, and rational, there stands the native bewilderment of the existential subject, revolted by mere animality, unsure of his way through the maze of philosophies, trying to live without a known purpose, suffering despite an unmotivated will, threatened with inevitable death and, before death, with disease and even insanity.\textsuperscript{70}

While this description of human existence may appear hopeless, it is not intended as such, for it is merely an illustration of the ‘concrete unity-in-tension’ which is the human person. Lonergan names this tension the problem of the ‘polymorphism of human consciousness’ which means that “The pattern in which [consciousness] flows may be

\textsuperscript{68} Beshear, 162-163.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 163. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{70} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 385.
biological, aesthetic, artistic, dramatic, practical, intellectual, or mystical.” To the extent that these conflicting patterns are at odds with the orientation of the pure desire, human beings fail to live in accordance with the orientation that the pure desire provides. Consequently, the normative structure of cognitional process becomes distorted and we fail to achieve fully rational self-consciousness. We can, however, fight against the alien desires that misdirect the pure desire to know through the process of appropriating our pure, intellectual desire. According to Beshear, “This process involves a significant shift in the subject’s pattern of experience and may result in the reordering of many desires according to the judgments of the detached and disinterested desire.” This reordering stems from a conscious decision to attempt live in accord with the demands of the pure desire to know.

Beshear explains, however, that there are obstacles to our attempts to live in accord with the pure desire, such as bias and despair. Despair cripples our original sense of wonder, while bias interferes with our ability to follow whatever sense of wonder may be preserved within us, preventing us from asking and answering all of the relevant questions that fulfill our original inquiry. This ability to openly follow the paths of our questions is what for Lonergan constitutes human reason or rationality. This rationality arises from the pure desire to know, which Beshear describes as “a desire that carries human beings beyond the boundaries of self-interest to an apprehension of their desires.

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71 Ibid.
72 Beshear, 164.
as merely one component in a vast universe.” Bias, however, interferes directly with our ability to be rational.

Beshear argues that the self-concerned realm of human ego is always in tension with the intellectual pattern of experience, and yet as human beings develop morally and intellectually it becomes possible to undertake a sometimes difficult and painful dialectical process through which we are reoriented away from our self-concern and toward the universe of being. She notes that “the pure desire is the chief ‘operator’ in human development, so that human development progresses inasmuch as humans orient themselves toward detached desire.” This process requires a conversion of our intellect and our will, which is made possible through a commitment to the pure desire. This desire can orient human living, but is always in tension with full human existence, which shares organic and psychic, as well as intellectual elements. These organic and psychic components of human existence provide the potency from which the pure desire emerges. While this tension is a constant for human existence, we have the capacity to consciously recognize and address our own situation. This capacity is unique to the rational knower and is itself made possible by the existence of the pure desire to know. This mediation of the tension that is at the core of human existence becomes possible through the realization of the detachment and disinterestedness of the pure desire to know. This detachment does not require one to embrace an asceticism or reject the material world and its concomitant desires, but rather to be willing to follow the guidance

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73 Ibid., 166.
74 Ibid., 168.
75 Ibid., 169. As Beshear notes, “intellectual development operates according to the same principles that structure the finality of the rest of the universe: the higher systematizes the lower without destroying it.” These processes of development will be discussed in depth in the following chapters.
of the pure desire as it leads us through a discovery of the universe of being, in all of its elements.

V. Desire and ‘Ultimate Reality’

Elizabeth A. Morelli also analyzes Lonergan’s approach to desire.76 Beshear’s interest is a comparison of Lonergan’s account with diverse philosophical and theological positions. Morelli on the other hand proposes that her own discussion will address Lonergan’s notion of “our access, our means of approaching ultimate reality” while simultaneously discussing potential philosophical objections to Lonergan’s approach.77

Morelli begins by noting two important points about Lonergan’s philosophical method. First, Lonergan “writes in the Cartesian tradition of the modern philosophic shift to the subject.” Second, “his method is phenomenological in the traditional Husserlian sense insofar as its starting point in the subject is the data of conscious-intentionality.”78 These methodological approaches lead Lonergan to discover that there is “an indubitable and existentially ineluctable desire, an immanent intentionality” within human consciousness that Lonergan calls the “pure desire to know.”79

Morelli argues that “as the ‘immanent source’ of transcendence this desire is the operator at every increment in cognitional process, and it is finally the bridge to the

77 Ibid., 51.
78 Ibid.
79 Lonergan, Insight, 348.
ultimate.” Morelli examines Lonergan’s argument critically, raising questions such as whether such a desire exists. If it does exist, are the adjectives that Lonergan uses to describe it (such as pure, immanent, unrestricted, cognitive, transcending, conscious, indubitable, etc.) accurate? What would serve as sufficient evidence to demonstrate the existence of such a pure desire to know?

In her examination of Lonergan’s account of the pure desire to know, Morelli considers the terms ‘pure’, ‘desire,’ and ‘know’. She claims that for Lonergan “There is a human dynamism which is simply a reaching out, a stretching forth, a seeking, an intending of knowledge and truth.” This desire is both prior to the attainment of knowledge, and to the asking of concrete questions in the first place. Morelli illustrates this claim with Lonergan’s statement in *Insight* that this pure desire “is not the verbal utterance of questions…It is the prior and enveloping drive” that manifests itself in questions.

Morelli argues that the term ‘pure’ is related to the priority of the desire. She asserts that Lonergan’s use of the term ‘pure’ is analogous to ‘*a priori*’, and notes that “As pure and *a priori* this desire is understood to be universal, though not necessary.”

Still, the fact that this desire is dynamic within human consciousness does not mean that it is always respected by human knowers. As Morelli observes, the fact that people do stupid things is not a legitimate argument against universal presence of such a desire. In

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80 Morelli, 51.
82 *Insight*, 348.
83 Morelli, 52.
fact, we recognize certain decisions and behaviors as unintelligent precisely because they violate the universally operative desire to know.

Morelli continues: “In addition to universal, Lonergan also means by ‘pure’ both immanent and spontaneous.”84 And, “By pure desire, then, Lonergan means a primordial, pre-linguistic, pre-conceptual, spontaneous, immanent, universal dynamism … it is a conscious intending oriented toward an objective.”85 This desire is intelligently conscious, in that it seeks understanding and explanation. It is rationally conscious in that it seeks objectivity, truth, knowledge; it aims to know truth, to know what is in fact so, and to know being.

The pure desire is “conscious and intentional. But for Lonergan there is a hierarchy of levels of conscious-intentionality.”86 The desire changes on each level, “the quality of consciousness undergoes a change on each higher level, and so does the nature of the primordial dynamism.”87 The pure desire manifests differently on the various levels of consciousness, and also serves as the operator that moves us from one level of consciousness to the next. Hence, Morelli notes, the pure desire is “the ‘immanent source of transcendence’, ”88 as Lonergan claims.

The pure desire is rational, and thus functions as both critical and normative. It is critical in its desire for sufficient evidence. It functions as normative insofar as the relentless drive for questioning which manifests the pure desire to know serves as the criterion for the validity of insights, and thus provides the ground for normative

84 Ibid., 53.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Lonergan, Insight, 636.
objectivity. As Lonergan points out, only when we have exhausted all further questions can we be confident about making a judgment that is virtually unconditioned.\textsuperscript{89}

The pure desire is infinite, relentless, unquenchable, hence it is detached and disinterested. If it weren’t detached, it might be swayed by our internal fears, biases, wants, etc. If it weren’t disinterested, our intellectual orientation might be swayed by our interests. Morelli claims that “Detachment and disinterestedness are, then, modes of unrestrictedness. They specifically counter self-imposed limitations of the pure desire.”\textsuperscript{90}

Lonergan makes a controversial claim about this unrestricted pure desire, arguing that its existence is indubitable.\textsuperscript{91} Morelli proceeds to evaluate Lonergan’s arguments to support this controversial claim, as well as to examine potential criticisms of Lonergan’s position. She argues that post-modern thinkers, such as Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty, offer repudiations of philosophical eros that are anti-metaphysical as well as anti-epistemological. Specifically, she claims that “The notion of objective truth is taken to be an outmoded fiction of classical philosophy. If there is no truth, it follows that the pure desire to know or the will to truth is either a futile, infantile yearning, or a mask for some ‘real’ underlying drive, or both.”\textsuperscript{92} Rorty denies objective truth, instead promoting a view of the “‘edifying philosopher’ [who] is not a lover of wisdom, \textit{sophia}, but a promoter of a kind of practical wisdom…the ever-unfolding, aimless course of discourse.” In his essay, “Feminism, Ideology, and Deconstruction: A Pragmatist View,” Rorty argues against the notion of truth, claiming

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 287.
\textsuperscript{90} Morelli, 54.
\textsuperscript{91} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 638.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 55.
Pragmatists and deconstructionists agree that everything is a social construct and that there is no point in trying to distinguish between the “natural” and the “merely” cultural. They agree that the question is which social constructs to discard and which to keep, and that there is no point in appealing to “the way things really are” in the course of struggles over who gets to construct what.93

In fact, Rorty embraces an “anti-metaphysical polemic” that he claims is shared by “post-Nietzscheans” such as the above detailed Pragmatists, such as Rorty himself, and Deconstructionists, such as Jacques Derrida. He urges feminists to adopt a pragmatic approach to producing social change, arguing “all that matters is what we can do to persuade people to act differently than in the past. The question of what ultimately, deep down, determines whether they will or will not change their ways is the sort of metaphysical topic feminists can safely neglect.”94

Susan Bickford, in her essay, “Why We Listen to Lunatics,” is interested in a feminist debate surrounding antifoundationalist theories of knowledge. She notes that “by antifoundational, I mean theories that reject an ahistorical, absolute foundation for knowledge, and relatedly, for the human self … Pragmatism is a powerful contemporary example of such theories (post-modernism is another).”95 Bickford is ultimately critical of Rorty’s approach, arguing that his approach “misunderstands the nature of power and the relation between theory and practice.”96

Bickford also examines the work of Foucault. Foucault, unlike Rorty, does not reject the notion of a drive or desire for human inquiry. Rather, he attempts to construe

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94 Ibid., 100.
96 Ibid.
this desire as “a libidinal drive for power and dominance.” Morelli asserts that “For Foucault the desire to know is destructive.”

Many feminists are interested in engaging with Foucault’s work, but not uncritically. Bickford, for example, claims that “an antifoundationalist thinker like Foucault, who is explicitly concerned with ‘how human beings are made subjects,’ might prove more useful [than a pragmatist like Rorty] for feminists and others concerned with subjugation and transformation.”

Margaret McClaren concurs, commenting on the relationship between feminism and Foucault in her article, “Foucault and the Subject of Feminism.” McClaren notes that “many feminists have been engaged in applying and extending Foucault’s work as well as criticizing it. Those who think Foucault and feminism can be allies site his rejection of metanarratives, his emphasis on the body and sexuality, and his deconstruction of the subject.”

Feminists do not embrace all of Foucault’s work positively, however. For example, McClaren cites concerns about Foucault’s treatment of the subject, as well as his failure to consider seriously the role of gender which leads to a bias toward a masculine notion of the ethical subject.

Feminist critiques of Foucault, however, pale in comparison to their concerns about the antifoundationalist philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Feminist scholars are disturbed not only by the antifoundationalism and violence of Nietzsche’s philosophy, but also Nietzsche’s treatment of woman and the feminine.

97 Morelli, 55.
98 Bickford, 114.
100 Ibid., 109.
101 Ibid., 122.
Jean Graybeal argues that Nietzsche’s treatment of women is complex, and at times very troubling. Among other passages, she cites section 59 from *The Gay Science* in which Nietzsche claims, “When we love a woman, we easily conceive a hatred for nature on account of all the repulsive natural functions to which every woman is subject.”

Graybeal comments, “Nietzsche is implicitly referring here to menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth … [his] language conveys a sense of abjection and horror in the face of the physical, natural, and perhaps explicitly sexual existence of a beloved, idealized, almost sacred image of ‘woman’.” In her book, *Womanizing Nietzsche*, Kelly Oliver argues “Nietzsche makes woman and the feminine into an object for a masculine subject … while Nietzsche opens philosophy onto the other, the body, he closes off the possibility of a specifically feminine other and there by eliminates the possibility of sexual difference.”

While Morelli’s own concerns about Nietzsche are not explicitly feminist, she is nevertheless concerned with themes in Nietzsche’s philosophy which are relevant for feminist discourse. In particular, Morelli cites Nietzsche as the staunchest critic of the notion of a pure desire to know. Nietzsche is suspicious of the desire to know and files it under a ‘will to truth’. This “will to truth is the guise assumed by the will to power under the corrupting influence of the ascetic ideal.” For Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal is the “most twisted manifestation of the will to power” which arises from “weakness and

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105 Morelli, 55-56.
decadence.” Morelli cites a particularly damning passage from the *Genealogy of Morals* in which Nietzsche accuses most of the philosophers who came before him of being dominated by the ascetic ideal. As a result, Nietzsche contends that philosophers have been caught up in an attempt to justify the will to truth, and fail to realize that the will to truth is merely a twisting of the will to power which is destructive of the creative will.

Morelli points out, however, that within Nietzsche’s critique of the will to truth lies a self-reflective recognition of his own need to avoid being deceived, as well as deceiving others. Nietzsche rejects the ascetic ideal primarily because those who fall under it practice the most abhorrent form of self-deception. Notes Morelli, “When a hunger for power and self-aggrandizement masquerades as detached, cool inquiry, we despise most of all the masquerade.” She argues in effect that Nietzsche’s position ultimately bolsters Lonergan’s argument, because the abhorrence of deception voiced by Nietzsche in fact exemplifies the critical spirit reflected in Lonergan’s notion of the pure desire to know. Morelli asks, “Is the critical spirit, which questions, doubts, even denies a pure desire to know, not itself the reflective transformation of this pure desire?” She answers this question in the affirmative.

Morelli suggests that a dialectic approach might be best in comparing Lonergan’s position to that of his critics. For example, a comparison of Lonergan’s position with that of Nietzsche would require a “dialectic of fundamental dynamisms [that] would examine

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106 Ibid., 56.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., 57.
the will to power and the pure desire to know as inextricably linked, as in competition, and as effecting change.”\textsuperscript{109} She asserts that this possibility of dialectical comparison is important because in undertaking such an examination of Lonergan’s notion of the pure desire to know, one realizes that “The possibility of the existence and operation of such a desire draws attention to the nature of the radical thrust of the present age, to the critical spirit that would deny the possibility of objectivity and truth, for the sake of truth.”\textsuperscript{110}

However, before such a dialectical encounter between Lonergan and feminist philosophy is undertaken, we must first examine Lonergan’s analysis of what it means to approach one’s own questioning in a self-reflective manner. In addition, we must examine in further detail aspects of feminist criticism that pertain to the cognitional and metaphysical issues addressed by Lonergan’s philosophy. In particular, we will examine carefully the debate concerning the metaphysical status regarding what feminists have named the “sex/gender distinction”. While the epistemological questions raised by feminist theorists are indeed pressing, my claim is that in order to address them seriously, we must first examine the underlying metaphysical challenges and assumptions surrounding the interpretation of the fact that the human race is divided into (at least) two sexes.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 59.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
Chapter Two:
Sex, Gender, and Metaphysics:
Feminist Theorists Debate the Sex/Gender Distinction

I. Introduction

This chapter aims to articulate some of the most pressing questions addressed today by feminist theorists and theorists of gender studies about the relationship between sex and gender. The problem I will address here is that of the “sex/gender” distinction. Succinctly put, I will examine several major positions regarding the relation between sex and gender. The main divide in this debate regards the question of whether biological sex is in any way determinative of gender characteristics. There are attempts to address this question by three main differing schools of thought, but the question that emerges in each of these approaches is: How are we to interpret embodiment? More specifically, what is the relationship between embodiment and what are commonly referred to as “gender characteristics,” i.e. femininity, masculinity and anything in between?

One answer to this question is that feminine and masculine characteristics are directly determined by biology. This view holds that it is natural and/or essential for a person who is biologically male to exhibit conventionally masculine characteristics, and for a person who is biologically female to exhibit conventionally feminine characteristics. This view, often called “essentialism” or “naturalism,” has been expressed in a variety of ways. For example, in the “one sex”

male biology.\textsuperscript{112} This model is expressed, for example, by second century physician Claudius Galenus: “Turn outward the woman’s, turn inward, so to speak, and fold double the man’s, and you will find the same in both in every respect.”\textsuperscript{113} Following from this, masculine characteristics, understood as the essential correlate of male biology, are asserted as the standard or universal expression of human life, while feminine characteristics and biology are understood as secondary, or even as abnormal and grotesque biological error.

Another version of the essentialist or naturalist viewpoint, the “two-sex” model, argues for complementarity between the sexes rather than asserting that “woman is but man turned outside in” as in the “one-sex” model. In the “two-sex” model female biology and feminine characteristics are understood in relation to male biology and masculine characteristics, rather than as opposed. In both models, male and female are understood as two stable, incommensurable sexes, and gender roles are understood as based in these “natural facts.”

With the development of the human sciences, as well as “postmodern” theory, feminists begin to vigorously debate the question of whether a binary gender system based in “natural fact” has any ontological necessity. Over the past several decades, theories of social constructionism emerged out of an emphasis on interpreting sexual biology as androgynous, in opposition to an essentialist account. The typical understanding of a social constructionist view of gender holds that the differences


\textsuperscript{113} Claudius Galenus, as quoted in Laqueur, 5.
between male and female biology are completely insignificant with regard to gender characteristics. Thus, a common conception is that if biology has no direct effect upon gender, then gender must be nothing more than a social or cultural construction.\(^{114}\)

In reality, the story is more complicated. By the early 1970’s, accounts of the relation between sex and gender had become divided into what can be broadly construed as two opposing points of view, one maintaining the traditional view that gender characteristics are determined by biology, the other arguing that gender is socially constructed, with no essential connection to biology.\(^{115}\) Over the past several decades of feminist thought, the dominant strains of social constructionism aimed to free women from the social ramifications of thousands of years of oppression derived from an essentialist view of the relationship between sex and gender. In *theorizing gender*,\(^{116}\) Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon argue that “Theories stressing the social construction of gender can be (crudely) divided into two main types.”\(^{117}\) The first type are theories that take a generally materialist bent, stressing the “structural features of the social world” which divide the roles of men and women within a society as well as emphasizing “the concrete social relations, or work, the family, sexuality, etc. The second type are

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\(^{114}\) An argument that follows is that so far as traditional gender norms are socially constructed, such norms can also be dismantled, and new emancipatory gender norms can easily be created and substituted for traditional gender norms.

\(^{115}\) Of course the feminist debate is more complicated than this simplification. Social constructionists do not all hold the same viewpoint, see for example, Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimons, Kathleen Lennon. *theorizing gender* (sic). (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), chapter 3. Nor do all gender traditionalists hold their view for the same reasons, for we find appeals to nature, to religion, to biology all attempting to account for a traditional view of the relationship between biological sex and gender characteristics.


“discursive theories” which focus on the “meanings which are attached to being male or female within society, emphasizing the role of language and culture.”

Alsop, et. Al. argue that these varying positions on the social construction of gender owe a common intellectual debt to feminist work which made the theoretical leap to distinguish between sex and gender. In particular, sociologist Ann Oakley, in her work *Sex, Gender, and Society* “argued that gender was distinct from sex, that gender referred to the social characteristics, masculinity and femininity, and [was] variable, whereas sex related to biological sex and was more fixed.” In addition, feminist anthropologist Gayle Rubin is often credited with forwarding the distinction between sex and gender, particularly in her 1975 essay, “The Traffic in Women,” in which she discussed the notion of a universal “sex/gender system.” Rubin’s writings proved very influential in the later work of feminist and queer theorist Judith Butler. Butler traces the theoretical lineage of the sex/gender divide back even further than 1975, to the 1952 work of Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoir noted in her weighty 1952 philosophical tome, *The Second Sex*, that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” Butler argues that “Simone de Beauvoir’s formulation distinguishes sex from gender.”

In addition to these works that forward the theoretical distinction between sex and gender, during the 1970’s and 1980’s theoretical viewpoints began to emerge that aimed to focus on the meaning of the body, specifically the fact that humans are born into

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118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., 66.
121 de Beauvoir, 267.
122 Judith Butler “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex” *Yale French Studies*, (1986), 72, 35.
different bodies. These views result from attempts to rethink embodiment as an expression of a complicated matrix of multiple factors. These so called “sexual difference” theorists attempted to consider seriously the relationship between the body and the emergence of gender characteristics, without reducing gender to something essentially determined by sex. This questioning of the meaning of sexually differentiated embodiment undertaken by theorists of sexual difference proved controversial, sparking a debate over whether such theories are biologist and essentialist.123

“Sexual difference” theorists include Luce Irigaray, Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens, and Judith Butler. These theorists work out of both postmodernism and psychoanalysis, and criticize the Western metaphysical tradition and its tendency to construct and support hierarchies that bolster patriarchy. Irigaray (and Grosz and Gatens following her) uses the insights of psychoanalysis and post-structuralism to rethink both the metaphysical groundings and symbolic iterations of embodiment and thus consider the notion of sexual difference seriously. This Irigarayan approach to sexual difference finds meaning in creating a discourse of female symbolism. This new discourse serves as an alternative to the symbols and discourse employed by patriarchal culture to restrict the lives and freedoms of women.

Butler’s position has a strongly constructionist slant. She takes a different path, however, relying on Foucault’s insights as well as the tools of psychoanalysis and post-

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123 This debate raged particularly over the work of Luce Irigaray. For a discussion of this issue, see Nancy Fraser’s introduction to Nancy Fraser and Sandra Lee Bartky, ed. *Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, Agency, and Culture*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 10-11.
structuralism to avoid an oversimplified, behaviorist account of the effect of culture on our attitudes toward sex and gender. She instead devises an innovative and controversial theory of the construction of the gendered subject. Butler not only questions the claim that there is an essential connection between sex and gender, but argues that sex itself, usually understood as a natural, biological substrate, is socially constructed every bit as much as gender. All of these thinkers ultimately aim to construct theoretical positions which critique traditional metaphysical points of view in order to avoid falling into “essentialist” biological reductionism. Perhaps the most original and influential of these various theoretical positions is devised by Irigaray.

II. Sexual Difference: The Irigarayan Perspective

Luce Irigaray, perhaps the most widely known and influential theorist of sexual difference, critiques feminist equality theorists for their tendency to assume maleness/masculinity (among other things) as a universal standard that women strive to become “equal to.” This is a tendency so deeply rooted that even Simone De Beauvoir has been accused of harboring it. Influenced by her reading of Irigaray, Tina Chanter points out that in The Second Sex, the answer to women’s situation is to ignore the fact that the female sex is different from the male sex, and to encourage women to transcend the adversity of their situations (following Sartre’s dictum to realize one’s true potential as a free human being) and become to all intents and purposes like men. This means ... that sexual difference is seen as irrelevant to feminism.\footnote{124 Tina Chanter. }\textit{Ethics of Eros: Irigaray’s Rewriting of the Philosophers. }\textit{(New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 75.}
Irigaray is opposed to this notion of universal subjectivity. She claims that the focus on universal subjectivity taken up in women’s struggle for equality has the effect of an erasure of sexual difference. In Irigaray’s view, this is a dangerous proposal, because we cannot ignore the fact that human beings (at least for now) are dependent upon sexual reproduction for the survival of their race. Hence to erase sexual difference is flirting with the possible genocide of humanity. Instead she emphasizes difference, noting that the “human species is divided into two genders which ensure its production and reproduction.”\textsuperscript{125}

Irigaray, and theorists who follow her thought closely like Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, endeavors to establish the notion of sexual difference as ontologically fundamental, insisting that we must consider seriously the sexual specificity of women. However, Irigaray herself does not limit her scope to the problem of sexual difference. In fact, her project of developing what she calls an “ethic of sexual difference” focuses on social as well as ontological considerations. Irigaray poses the question, “Has a worldwide erosion of the gains won in women’s struggles occurred because of the failure to lay foundations different from those on which the world of men is constructed?”\textsuperscript{126}

Chanter brings out the importance of the wider considerations:

The possibility of articulating an ethic of sexual difference is bound up with the need to insist on recognizing the validity of the specific rights and duties of specific groups distinct from their identity as defined by the social whole. Insofar as this project appeals to the importance of specifying multiple ways of existing in a society, it opens the way for an ethics that extends beyond sexual difference.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{125} Irigaray, Luce. \textit{je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference.} (New York: Routledge, 1993), 12.
\textsuperscript{127} Chanter, 126.
This attempt to make space for multiple ways of existing within a society begins for Irigaray with the need to make space for women\textsuperscript{128} to speak in their own voice, on their own terms. Elizabeth Grosz describes this as a project of “challenging and deconstructing the cultural representations of femininity so that it may be capable of representation and recognition, in its own self-defined terms.”\textsuperscript{129}

Irigaray takes up this project of developing sexual difference by using the tools of deconstruction and psychoanalysis to critically engage philosophy, culture, and, ironically, psychoanalytic theory itself, particularly as it is articulated by Freud and Lacan. She uses the Derridean notion of \textit{différance} to critique the hierarchical binaries typical of the “phallocentric” tradition of western metaphysics. Derrida notes that he “will designate as \textit{différance} the movement according to which language, or any code, any system of referral in general, is constituted ‘historically’ as a weave of differences.”\textsuperscript{130} Derrida uses this neologism (or neographism, as he calls it) to make an argument against a ‘metaphysics of presence’ which he associates with a solipsistic notion of consciousness. He asks, “… can one not conceive of a presence, and of a presence to itself of the subject before speech or signs, a presence to itself of the subject in a silent and intuitive consciousness?”\textsuperscript{131} Derrida’s claim is that this solipsism is

\textsuperscript{128} Irigaray has been criticized, I think rightly, for failing to address broadly issues of oppression (racial, economic, ethnic, etc.) of all peoples as a result of white, western, patriarchal culture. However work has been done attempting to address questions of racial identity and oppression using an Irigarayan perspective. See for example Mary K. Bloodsworth. “Embodiment and Ambiguity: Luce Irigaray, Sexual Difference, and ‘Race’,” \textit{International Studies in Philosophy}, (1999), 31(2), 69-90.


\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid.}, 16.
reflective of the ‘logocentric’ order of Western metaphysics. His response to this problem, through the notion of *différance*, is:

Thus one comes to posit presence – and specifically consciousness – no longer as the absolutely central form of Being but as a 'determination' and as an 'effect'... within a system which is no longer that of presence, but of *différance*, a system that no longer tolerates the opposition of activity and passivity, not that of cause and effect, or of indetermination and determination, etc.\(^{132}\)

In comparison with Derrida, Irigaray is more concerned with the dichotomy between the privileged poles of ‘mind, reason, man, truth, vision,’ valued over ‘body, appetite, women, falsity, touch.’ Feminists assert that the association of maleness and masculinity with the former, these privileged poles, creates and constantly reinscribes the notion of man as universal subject, a claim which Irigaray calls into question. Instead of subsuming both sexes under this notion of universality, Irigaray hopes to break down such dualistic hierarchies, employing the Derridean notion of *différance* to open a space where philosophy can explore the differences between the sexes. Grosz notes that this would in effect “clear a space in which women’s self-description in terms other than those which define men’s self-sameness becomes possible.”\(^{133}\) Thus, Irigaray is exploring an alternative female symbolic that is contingent, as opposed to universal, in order to free us from masculine concepts that parade as universal.

One area where women have been unable to define themselves is their experience and description of desire. Philosophers’ understandings of the western conception of desire have in many ways shaped and been shaped by western metaphysics.\(^ {134}\) More

\[^{132}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{133}\text{Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, 104.}\]
\[^{134}\text{It is important to note here that Lonergan’s notion of pure desire, as discussed in chapter one, is distinct from this “traditional” Western conception of desire.}\]
importantly, the western conception of desire is not neutral. According to Irigaray, the western conception of desire is a male conception, formed out of the male lived experience. Irigaray is focusing here not on the fact of male anatomy, but on the male body interpreted as an inherently social “[bearer] of meanings and social values.”\textsuperscript{135} This socially situated reading of the body gives rise to Irigaray’s interest in the morphology of the body - the body as imagined and experienced by a person, as opposed to the anatomical facts about the body literally interpreted in a scientific manner. Grosz notes that Irigaray’s “emphasis on morphology in place of anatomy indicates that she has stepped from the register of nature into that of social signification.”\textsuperscript{136} According to Irigaray, the male experience of desire is tellic. That is to say, the male desire seeks a telos, it seeks completeness, fulfillment - an ordered universe in which everything is categorized and put into its place.\textsuperscript{137} Hence this experience of desire is the ground of masculine philosophy.

She finds evidence of this formulation of desire in Plato’s theory of the forms (the soul yearning to completeness in a return to the One), Aristotle’s hierarchy of being, and phenomenology's notion of eidetic intuition. In her readings of Plato and Aristotle, Irigaray draws out some of the morphological differences between the male and female lived experience - the solid, containing, tellic morphology of male experience, versus the fluid, contained, daimonic form of desire expressive of female morphology. For Irigaray it is these morphological differences that constitute the differences in our approaches to

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 112.
\textsuperscript{137} Lonergan’s unique metaphysical approach is also opposed to this static notion of being.
philosophizing. She concludes that the female subject has been all but excluded from the discourse of philosophy by this masculine desire for completeness.

According to Irigaray this “phallocentric” exclusion of the female subject invalidates any claim of completeness on the part of western philosophy, both ancient and contemporary. She asserts that “Eidetic intuition does away with the interposition, the intervention, the mediation of any kind of path or trail ... Eidetic intuition is produced, whole and entire, in the immediacy of the noesis.” ¹³⁸ She claims that this view grows out of a metaphysical vision of the relationship between God and Being. She claims, “Points of view that are, it seems, determined once and for all in the perfection of their rectitude, of/upon Being that assigns self-identity to each thing and fixes its nature, freed from the metamorphoses of existence. Soul, specular screen, mirroring an infinite number of eyes: God.”¹³⁹ She takes this ‘God's eye view’ to the be ultimate goal of the eidetic intuition practiced by phenomenologists such as Husserl,

What giddy joy in turning round imperceptibly in the universal orb of the Father's field of vision, constellated with points of view that are always absolutely the same. The ideal morphology of the Father's vision excludes all change, all alteration or modification – optical, directional, or semantic. And thus it authorizes the perfect equivalence to his logos, the appropriation to/of his word.¹⁴⁰

Irigaray also extends this morphological critique to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, as their notions of sexuality and drives can be characterized as overwhelmingly masculine. She claims that in Freud's approach (and in Lacan following him) “the desire for the same, for the self-identical, the self (as) same, and again of the

¹³⁹ Ibid., 318.
¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 320.
similar, the alter ego, and to put it in a nutshell, the desire for the auto … the homo … the male, dominates the representational economy" and thus, “‘Sexual difference’ is a derivation of the problematics of sameness.” Grosz notes that according to Irigaray, Freud and Lacan attribute “an a priori privilege to masculinity and its qualities.” This is evidenced in Irigaray's claim that Freud uncritically accepts an economy of representation which is an “organized system whose meaning is regulated by paradigms and units of value that are in turn determined by male subjects.” Irigaray criticizes psychoanalytic theory, but nevertheless she also uses a transformed psychoanalytic analysis (informed by her attempt to create a feminine symbolics) to “articulate a culturally (rather than psychically) produced unconscious, a repression in texts, knowledges and institutionally regulated practices.” Her use of these psychoanalytic techniques is largely metaphorical, in an attempt to lay bare the unacknowledged and undeveloped themes and symbols underpinning western, phallocentric theory. For Irigaray, psychoanalytic technique is not wedded to the phallocentric economy out of which it was born. She finds psychoanalysis useful for its ability to help the theorist to uncover the symbolic currents that underlie the seeming solidity of Western metaphysics.

Grosz notes that “Irigaray uses psychoanalysis without being committed to its fundamental presuppositions ... For psychoanalytic theory can itself be read as a symptom of a broader, underlying cultural and intellectual misogyny.”

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141 Ibid.
142 Grosz, Sexual Subversions, 104.
143 Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, 22.
144 Grosz, Sexual Subversions, 103.
145 Ibid., 105.
According to Irigaray, such misogyny also flourishes in the realm of philosophy. For Irigaray, women have long been relegated by philosophers within the ontological category of place. First and foremost, within the phallocentric economy, woman constitutes place through the maternal body, by the gestating and bearing of children, and secondarily through the home, in the rearing of children and maintenance of the private sphere of the domicile. She notes that the problem for woman with respect to place is an inability to achieve “passage from one place to another.”

Women have been fixated (metaphorically) within one ‘place’ or realm within human existence. Therefore women have been denied the literal and symbolic mobility that is essential in order to understand place ontologically, as Irigaray hopes, as the intermediary between form and matter. This view of place would take seriously the fluid, amorphous symbols that evoke the feminine imaginary that has been erased out of Western metaphysical language. Thus Irigaray posits place, like sexual difference, as an ontological question.

Irigaray argues that philosophy has been constructed as a male discourse. Accordingly, philosophy is regarded as the solid, stable, contemplative male realm. The fluid, bodily realm of woman is thought in opposition to the solid, stable contemplative realm of the male. This fluid realm of woman differs not only in form, but in the structure of female desire as well.

Women’s desire is not structured in terms of a tellic, stable goal. Rather, as Irigaray illustrates in her reading of the character of Diotima in Plato’s Symposium, a

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147 Ibid.
woman’s desire is fluid, it is constantly in motion, a motion that stems from the morphology of the female body. This fluidity threatens to undermine what is understood as the solid, complete stability of metaphysics as constructed through a male morphology. Irigaray argues that as men cannot get a grasp on this fluidity it is frustrating to their tellic orientation and so they attempt to contain it within the realm of place. Philosophy, therefore, has conceived of woman as body, one who contains matter, giving birth to children. Woman is weighed down by her motherly duties, and therefore is unable to enter the sphere where discourse is allowed to flourish.

According to Irigaray, this female fluidity threatens stability and therefore makes men uncomfortable. As a result, women are ironically relegated to the place of comforter, in order to suppress this discomfort which men experience. If man could only contain woman, put her in her place, he would not be threatened by her any longer. Yet man cannot contain woman, for she is “the other who is forever unknowable ... the one who differs from [him] sexually,”148 and so his efforts will always be thwarted. However, as Irigaray points out, even in its discomfort with the female body, the masculine is drawn to the maternal-feminine as place.149 Man desires woman to bear his children, to make a home that serves as a refuge from the world. This desire for the maternal-feminine is not simply a desire for fusion. Rather it is a desire for place. Man does not wish to fill the container of the maternal-feminine, he wishes for the maternal-feminine to constitute a place for him.

149 Ibid., 51.
Yet how is this constituting of place possible if woman already has been rendered as place, as a vessel that passively contains? How then can she actively constitute a place for man? This seems impossible if woman is simply a vessel. Irigaray suggests that the notion of place be oriented toward movement, toward creation of place, rather than as a static category of containment, for only as an intermediary can place offer the possibility of a genuine relation between man and woman.

But, if there is to be a place for a genuine meeting of the sexes, it cannot be simply constituted by woman as container. Rather, man must make a place for woman too. Yet by the limitations of his very morphology man cannot become a vessel or container for woman, unless it was in some way constituted as a woman’s return to herself through man. Male morphology, and as a result phallocentric philosophy, is focused on containing all that is vague, ambiguous, fluid. Thus, woman serves as the container that is necessary, but necessarily outside the neat realm of the phallocentric, logocentric discourse of Western metaphysics. Irigaray questions whether such a return to the self, of the woman's return to herself through her relation with a man, would constitute a genuine relation. If so, man would (symbolically) need to be open to woman’s desiring in order to make a place for woman’s fluidity and mobility. If there is to be a genuine relation between man and woman it must be constituted in and through motion, not through a static conception of desire. This would be a way to free woman from her inability to pass from one place to another. However this would require that man be open to the discomfort that occurs with the breakage of boundaries, with which
the mother (for example) is always already intimately familiar through her bodily experience of childbearing.

Philosophically, this would require a radical rethinking of the issue of place, one which takes seriously the question of sexual difference so that the notion of place could reside in its ‘proper place,’ in the between, in the gap between the sexes which, Irigaray insists, can never be fused. Perhaps then woman and man could enter into a genuine cohabitation, in which each creates a place for the other, in which desire is constituted through an economy of generosity on the part of both sexes. An economy based on generosity would perhaps make possible Irigaray’s suggestion that “the sex act would turn into the act whereby the other gives new form, birth, incarnation to the self. Instead of implying the downfall of the body, it takes part in the body’s renaissance.” This would not require a relationship of reciprocity in which one owes or expects something from the other, rather of utter generosity where each person gives of themself as they would a gift. In constituting an economy of desire as a gift economy, desire could no longer be conceived of as tellic. Rather, desire would be inexhaustible, as it would continuously renew itself in and through its generous spirit.

III. Elizabeth Grosz: Rethinking Corporeality

Elizabeth Grosz, in Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism, works out of an Irigarayan framework. Grosz understands Irigaray’s project as one of “rewriting the female body as a positivity rather than as a lack,” a project which involves two parts:

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150 Ibid.
first, “reorganizing and reframing the terms by which the body has been socially represented” and second, “challenging the discourses which claim to analyze and explain the body and subject scientifically – biology, psychology, sociology – to develop different perspectives that may be able to better represent women’s interests.”  

Grosz analyzes various approaches to thinking the body: the psychoanalytic approach, represented by Freud, Lacan, et.al., that analyzes the body in terms of psychical depth; the phenomenological approach, represented by Merleau-Ponty, which analyzes the body in terms of intentionality; and the approach she summarizes as interpreting the “body as social object,” represented by thinkers such as Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, all of whose thinking about the body is marked by the treatment of corporeality as a series of surfaces, energies, flows and forces. In this third approach, it is assumed that “the body does not hide or reveal an otherwise unrepresented latency or depth, but is a set of operational linkages and connections with other things, other bodies. The body is not simply a sign to be read, a symptom to be deciphered, but also a force to be reckoned with.”

For example, Deleuze uses the metaphor of the machine to express the connections made between bodies and things, in order to emphasize the point that the body is not simply "an organic totality which is capable of the wholesale expression of subjectivity."

Grosz finds something useful in each these forms of analysis, but she seems particularly interested in the approach to rethinking traditional ontological and

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152 Ibid., 120.
153 Ibid.
metaphysical problematics taken by Deleuze and Guattari. These thinkers develop a notion of the body as a “discontinuous, nontotalizable series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances and incorporeal events.”154 They also develop a notion of desire as becoming, instead of lack, which appeals to Grosz as an alternative to the psychoanalytic model. While Grosz admits that Deleuze and Guattari’s approach is unusual and particularly difficult to interrogate, she claims that there are parts of their analyses that can be useful (while simultaneously presenting a particular danger) for feminist theorizing. Ultimately, she finds that “Deleuze and Guattari produce a radical anti-humanism that renders animals, nature, atoms, even quasars as modes of radical alterity.”155 While Grosz does not propose to directly apply this radical anti-humanism to feminist analysis, she maintains that it presents a useful resource for feminists attempting to rethink the meaning of difference.

Her reflections lead up to an interrogation of the sexual specificity of the body. By this she means the basic biological differences that distinguish types of bodies, for example male, female, or hemaphrodite. She claims: “I hope not only to provide a framework with which to begin asking questions of male and female bodies in their irreducible specificities but also to provide a series of displacements and criticisms of the very (male) models that helped make these investigations possible.”156 Specifically she questions the “ontological status of the sexed body,”157 and reaches some preliminary conclusions, but no concrete determinations.

154 Ibid., 164-165.
155 Ibid., 179.
156 Ibid., 189.
157 Ibid.
Like other theorists of sexual difference, Grosz insists on the significance of corporeal sexual difference without falling into essentialism. She claims:

The sexual difference I explore here cannot be understood in terms of a fixed or ahistorical biology, although it must clearly contain a biological dimension. But biology cannot be regarded as a form whose contents are historically provided, not as a base on which cultural constructs are founded, nor indeed as a container for a mixture of culturally or individually specific ingredients. It is an open materiality, a set of (possibly infinite) tendencies and potentialities which may be developed, yet whose development will necessarily hinder or induce other developments or trajectories.¹⁵⁸

Unlike Judith Butler, Grosz understands sexual differentiation as tied to sexual reproduction. Grosz insists on the “irreducible specificity of women’s bodies, the bodies of all women, independent of class, race and history,”¹⁵⁹ However, as noted by Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, “this specificity is anchored in the bodily processes of reproduction (although Grosz accepts that the way these are experienced are in no way universal).”¹⁶⁰

Grosz seeks to “elucidate and negotiate” the aporia surrounding the question of the “ontological status of the sexed body.”¹⁶¹ She inquires as to whether the form of the human body, specifically with regard to sexual differentiation, is primarily given or produced through cultural influence. She ultimately decides that the body is infinitely pliable, and yet grounded in sexual differentiation. She claims that the “notion of sexual difference, a difference that is originary and constitutive … occupies a preontological – certainly a preepistemological - terrain insofar as it makes possible what things or

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 191.
¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 201.
¹⁶⁰ Alsop, et. al., 187.
¹⁶¹ Grosz, Volatile Bodies, 189.
entities, what beings, exist … and insofar as it must condition what we know.” Grosz argues that sexual difference functions ontologically as a “framework or horizon … that cannot appear in its own terms but is implied in the very possibility of an entity” upon which sexual identity is constituted.

IV. Moira Gatens’ Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction

Another thinker who considers the question of the importance of sexual difference is Moira Gatens. Unlike Irigaray, Gatens does not consider sexual difference to be ontologically fundamental. However she does reiterate the point that “sex and gender are not arbitrarily connected.” In her article, “A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction,” Gatens sets out to examine the distinction between sex (interpreted as biological essentialism) and gender (as socially constructed), asking what is the theoretical basis for this distinction, whether this distinction is coherent and/or valid, and what are the ethical and political effects of adopting this distinction as a theoretical framework? According to Gatens, many feminists (especially those she calls “Anglo-American” feminists) have a strong theoretical interest in using “gender” as a central explanatory and organizing category. Gatens argues that such feminists believe that if it can be shown that there is no necessary connection between the categories of gender and sex, then biological reductionism on the basis of sex can be avoided.

162 Ibid., 209.
163 Ibid.
166 She refers explicitly to Kate Millet, Nancy Chodorow, and Dorothy Dinnerstein.
Gatens takes issue with the idea, adopted by these theorists, of the body and psyche as a \textit{tabula rasa}. In this view the mind is seen as a neutral, passive entity upon which we inscribe social lessons, while the body is the “passive mediator” of these social lessons. The basic assumption is that if we can unlearn these lessons that equate masculinity with males and femininity with females, we can overcome patriarchy. In taking on this debate Gatens hopes to mediate between issues of sexual equality and sexual difference. She claims that her attempt is to “quell, once and for all, the tired (and tiring, if not tiresome) charges of essentialism and biologism so often levelled [sic.] at theories of sexual difference,” and, in addition, to “demonstrate the practical and theoretical viability of the politics of difference.”\footnote{167}

Gatens asserts that the theoretical framework upon which the sex/gender distinction rests follows insights such as those published by psychoanalyst Robert Stoller, in his book \textit{Sex and Gender} (1968).\footnote{168} In discussing the relationship between sexuality and socialization, Stoller claims that gender (cultural/psychological) identity can override sex (biology). Stoller bases his conclusions largely on the situation of the male transsexual. He argues that the development of transsexualism, specifically in males (he considers female transsexualism extremely rare) is determined not biologically or physically, but strictly through psycho-social factors. He claims that male transsexualism is caused by a inability to separate from the mother, in which the male child fails to

\footnote{167} \textit{Ibid.}, 141. 
develop his own identity, does not properly detach from the mother, and thus ultimately feels like a woman trapped in a man’s body.

Stoller’s work was taken up by some feminists as evidence for a justification of “the right to equality for all independently of sex.”\textsuperscript{169} Gatens criticizes this theoretical appropriation, however, saying that this view assumes that “Cultural and historical significances or meanings receive their expression in or are made manifest by an initially or essentially neutral consciousness which, in turn, acts upon an initially neutral body.” This socialization theory is thus rationalist, a-historical, and “posits a spurious neutrality of both the body and consciousness.”\textsuperscript{170}

Gatens disagrees with this position, claiming instead that “there is no neutral body, there are at least two kinds of bodies: the male body and the female body.”\textsuperscript{171} Thus, the subject is always sexed, or sexually specific. Following from this insight, Gatens claims that patriarchy is not strictly about gender, but about sexual difference. She argues that this is demonstrated by the fact that, within patriarchy, male and female bodies have different social value and significance. Addressing social constructionists whose aim is to re-educate society about conceptions of gender, Gatens says plainly, “Gender is not the issue; sexual difference is ... Identical social ‘training’, attitudes, or, if you will, conditioning, acquire different significances when applied to male or female subjects.”\textsuperscript{172} Gatens thus rejects a behaviorist conception of the subject, focusing on bodily experiences as sites of significance rather than products of social conditioning. In

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 142.  
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 143.  
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 145.  
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
Gatens’ view, the problem with socialization theory is that it ignores the process of signification. In turn it therefore ignores the fact that some bodily experiences and events are likely to be privileged sites of significance in most cultures.

One example of a bodily experience that is a privileged site of significance is the strictly female experience of menstruation. For Gatens, menstruation evidences a “network of relations obtaining between femininity and femaleness, that is, between the female body and femininity.”¹⁷³ For some cultures and religions,¹⁷⁴ menstruation is considered impure and women must take part in various purification rituals as a result. On the other hand, the significance of menstruation is less clear in Western liberal culture. Gatens notes that in Western culture, menstruation is most associated with shame and modesty, which she claims are characteristically feminine attributes. She critiques Freud’s failure to consider the effect of menstruation on the psyche of a pubescent girl, noting that “the flow of blood would have profound psychical significance for her” and that is it likely that such significance would “centre around ideas of castration, sexual attack and socially reinforced shame.” Gatens uses this insight to argue against a strict social constructionist position, claiming that because of their disconnection from such culturally significant experiences “there must be a qualitative difference between the kind of femininity ‘lived’ by men.”¹⁷⁵ In other words, our embrace and expression of traditionally gendered characteristics such as masculinity and femininity does not occur in a way that is neutral. Rather, our embodied reality serves to

¹⁷³ Ibid., 146.
¹⁷⁴ For example, in some forms of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and the niddah laws in some forms of Judaism.
¹⁷⁵ Gatens, Sex/Gender, 146.
mediate the way in which we express gendered characteristics. As a result, Gatens insists that gender cannot be equally inscribed on any body regardless of sex. Echoing Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,”176 Gatens’ point here is that the kind of ‘woman’ one becomes is mediated by the type of body one is born with and the concrete experiences that are particular to that body.

While egalitarian theorists might charge such a claim with essentialism due to its focus on the “biological body,” Gatens defends herself by pointing out that the body which is interrogated by the theorist of sexual difference is not the physical body, but the situated body, the body as lived by the particular subject. She claims that “If one wants to understand sex and gender or, put another way, a person’s biology and the social and personal significance of that biology as lived, then one needs an analysis of the imaginary body.”177 For this concept she is indebted to Lacan, drawing particularly from his works, “Mirror Stage” and “Some reflections on my ego,” in which he discusses what he calls “imaginary anatomy.” Lacan claims that the imaginary anatomy or body “varies with the ideas (clear or confused) about bodily functions which are prevalent in a given culture.”178 Examples of this phenomenon include the “phantom limb” in which a person still experiences a limb which has been amputated; hysterical paralysis, in which the hysteretic experiences paralysis of only a specific part of the body (for example the arm, but only from the elbow down); and anorexia or bulimia. In these phenomena, which

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176 De Beauvoir, 267.
177 Ibid., 147.
Susan Bordo has claimed are the modern day equivalents to hysteria,\textsuperscript{179} the anorectic or bulimic experiences a body image which differs dramatically from their measurable physical dimensions.

The imaginary body is the culturally influenced image that we as particular subjects have of our body and impose upon our body. Gatens claims that the imaginary body “is socially and historically specific in that it is constructed by a shared language; the shared psychical significance and privileging of various zones of the body (e.g. the mouth, the anus, the genitals); and common institutional practices and discourses (e.g. medical, juridical, and educational) on and through the body.”\textsuperscript{180} For the individual, the imaginary body acts as a bridge between sex and gender as well as body and mind; it resides in ‘the between’ of these oppositions, acting as a mediator. According to Gatens, the phenomenon of the imaginary body suggests that the relationship between sex and gender is neither conjoined nor disparate. Rather, there is a contingent (but not arbitrary) relation between, for example, the male body and masculinity, and the female body and femininity. She argues that the imaginary body is “the site of the historical and cultural specificity of masculinity and femininity.”\textsuperscript{181} While Gatens does suggest that at the level of the imaginary body ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ correspond to ‘male’ and ‘female’ biology, she does not wish to claim that this reflects some “fixed essence to ‘masculine

\textsuperscript{180} \textit{Ibid.}, 149.
\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Ibid.}
and feminine." 182 Instead, she argues for an historical specificity with regard to the
development and institution of gender roles.

For Gatens, a theory which considers seriously the imaginary body must
recognize the existence of a complex network of signification, as well as its historical,
psychological and cultural manifestations. This network is manifested, for example, in
the signification of feminine traits, insofar as they are assigned to a female body.
According to Gatens, women have taken on these traits as modes of defensive behavior
that utilize the “culturally shared fantasies about biology - that is, they are manifestations
of and reactions to the (conscious and unconscious) ideas we share about our biology.” 183
On the other hand, for a person who is born with male genitalia who takes on feminine
traits the signification would be different.

For example, she highlights the fact that “It is not masculinity per se that is
valorized in our culture but the masculine male.” 184 This has an important ethical and
political significance, for Gatens will claim that the issue is not really the fact that women
are socialized to femininity and males to masculinity. Rather, the issue is the “place of
these behaviours [sic] in the network of social meaning and the valorizing of one (the
male) over the other (the female) and the resultant mischaracterization of [historically
specific, not essentially mandated] relations of difference as relations of superiority and
inferiority.” 185 Thus, the ultimate point that Gatens is trying to make is that masculinity
and femininity differ qualitatively with regard to sex.

182 Ibid., 153.
183 Ibid., 149.
184 Ibid., 151.
185 Ibid., 151-152.
Gatens claims that the sex/gender distinction has been irresponsibly appropriated by feminists who are aware of the theoretical problems it creates, but who adopt it because it is convenient for reaching their political agendas. Both in the areas of Marxist feminism and identity politics, as well as others, the search for political equality has led to the use of the sex/gender distinction. According to Gatens, ideological bias has created theoretical error in these areas. Rather than aim for an ethics and politics of equality, in which the goal of gender neutrality actually leads to a ‘masculinization’ of women (in a society in which masculine men are the standard), Gatens is interested in creating an ethics and politics of difference. Such a politics would, most importantly, take seriously the role of the repression and control of women’s bodies, as opposed to merely focusing on what Gatens labels “the predominantly Anglo-American crass empirical equation between patriarchal sex-role socialization and patriarchal consciousness.”

V. Judith Butler: Gender Trouble

Judith Butler, like Moira Gatens, takes seriously the relationship between theorizing about the body and the political realities which women face. While she has been criticized for not thinking seriously enough about the role of the body in deciphering the relation between sex and gender, Butler’s work certainly has made an enormous impact. Her thinking on the subject can be traced to her 1990 book Gender Trouble, in which she outlines a critique of compulsory heterosexuality. In Gender Trouble Butler challenges the notion of “gender identity.” She asks, “To what extent do regulatory

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186 Ibid., 154.
practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person.”\textsuperscript{187}

Butler frames her inquiry with a critique of the metaphysics of substance, a notion originally associated with Nietzsche. Butler applies this critique to the problem of sex/gender. She takes aim primarily at “the notion that sex appears within hegemonic language as a \textit{substance}, as metaphysically speaking, a self-identical being.”\textsuperscript{188} She develops this critique out of her reading of Michael Haar. Butler claims that according to Haar

a number of philosophical ontologies have been trapped within certain illusions of ‘Being’ and ‘Substance’ that are fostered by the belief that the grammatical formulation of subject and predicate reflects the prior ontological reality of substance and attribute. These constructs, argues Haar, constitute the artificial philosophical means by which simplicity, order, and identity are effectively instituted. In no sense, however, do they reveal or represent some true order of things.\textsuperscript{189}

Butler proposes to apply this criticism to what she calls the popular “psychological categories” used to discuss notions of gender. Butler is primarily concerned with the reification of categories of identity into substance, especially with regard to notions of gender identity. She claims that “Gender can denote a unity of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender – where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self – and desire – where

\textsuperscript{188} \textit{Ibid.}, 25.
\textsuperscript{189} Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble}, 27-28. I don't believe that Butler means to suggest that there is no truth, but that truth as we understand it is associated with permanence, while for Butler truth must be understood within an 'order of things' that is in flux. Butler is quoting from From Michael Haar. “Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language,” \textit{The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation}, ed. David Allison (New York: Delta, 1977), 17-18.
desire is heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires.”¹⁹⁰ She proceeds to argue vociferously against this understanding of the relation between sex and gender, which she understands as an attempt to normalize a heterosexual orientation within society.

She opposes this conception of gender primarily because it gives rise to certain assumptions, for example, “not only a causal relation among sex, gender, and desire, but [the suggestion that] desire reflects or expresses gender and that gender reflects or expresses desire.”¹⁹¹ This can take the form of a naturalistic/essentialist view, or what she calls an “authentic-expressive paradigm in which some true self is said to be revealed simultaneously or successively in sex, gender, and desire ...”¹⁹² Butler concludes that any such view that posits a binary relationship between a “masculine term” and a “feminine term” serves to institute a “compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality” that is not really “natural” at all.¹⁹³

Opposing any natural or essential reading of the relation between sex and gender, Butler instead asserts that “Sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations” and that “the postulation of a normative sexuality that is ‘before’, ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impracticable dream.”¹⁹⁴ It is important to note here that Butler’s critique extends beyond gender – she asserts that both gender and sexuality are socially constructed. As we can never get beyond power, we must instead focus on rethinking sexuality and identity within the power relations that

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*.
¹⁹² *Ibid*.
shape sexuality and identity. This rethinking takes that form of creating subversive possibilities that serve to displace the current norms governing sex and gender.\footnote{Ibid., 41-43.}

Specifically, she suggests that “The repetition of heterosexual constructs within sexual cultures both gay and straight may well be the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories.”\footnote{Ibid., 43.}

Having made the assumption that there is no “‘person,’ … ‘sex,’ or … ‘sexuality’ that escapes the matrix of power,” Butler goes on to ask the question “What possibilities exist by virtue of the constructed character of sex and gender”? She notes that “If the regulatory fictions of sex and gender are themselves multiply contested sites of meaning, then the very multiplicity of their construction holds out the possibility of a disruption of their univocal posturing.”\footnote{Ibid., 42-43.} Her project is not to outline any traditional ‘ontology’ of gender, which she understands as the attempt of philosophical discourse to establish the naturalness or fixity of being outside of culture. Instead, her aim is to produce what she calls a ‘genealogy’ of gender ontology as it is currently constituted in society. She is not explicit about why she shifts from a discussion of sex and gender into an analysis strictly of gender. However it seems clear that she understands the construction of gender as having more ontological significance than the construction of sex.

Meaning, for Butler, and in particular the meaning of gender, is constructed by an “ongoing discursive practice” that is “open to intervention and resignification.” The “congealing” of gender into reified social roles is “an insistent and insidious practice,
sustained and regulated by various social means.” She says that “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.”\textsuperscript{198} Her aim is to uncover and deconstruct the appearance of gender as grounded in some real or substantial nature of the human being, and to reveal that gender is constituted by normative belief and the repetition of human action to fall within socially acceptable gender roles.

Butler criticizes the “sex/gender distinction and the category of sex itself” as notions that tend to assume a body that exists prior to sex. She claims that within these notions the body is understood as a “passive medium” which is granted meaning by some outside cultural force or influence. Butler wants to question the validity of this view of the body. She links it to Christian and Cartesian views, in which the body is understood as “inert matter, signifying nothing or, more specifically, signifying a profane void, the fallen state.”\textsuperscript{199} Butler accuses structuralism of having uncritically adopted the “Cartesian dualism presupposed by phenomenology” and reformulating mind/body dualism as the divide between nature/culture.\textsuperscript{200} She claims that we need to investigate the ways in which these dualisms still haunt the discourses about gender, discourses that “are supposed to lead us out of that binarism and its implicit hierarchy.”\textsuperscript{201}

In constructing her genealogy of gender ontology, Butler examines the roots of what she calls the “law of patriarchy.” In particular, she discusses how Lévi-Strauss's

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 164-165.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 165.
structuralist anthropology, and its problematic distinction between nature and culture, has supported essentialist interpretations of the relationship between sex and gender. Butler is concerned that the binary relation between culture and nature promotes a relationship of hierarchy in which culture freely “imposes” meaning on nature “and as a result “renders it into an ‘Other’ to be appropriated to its own limitless uses, safeguarding the ideology of the signifier and the structure of signification on the model of domination.”202 The source of such domination is, both symbolically and materially, the “law” that grounds patriarchal structures within culture. Of this “law of patriarchy” Butler claims,

The self-justification of a repressive or subordinating law almost always grounds itself in a story about what it was like before the advent of the law, and how it came about that the law emerged in its present and necessary form. The fabrication of those origins tends to describe a state of affairs before the law that follows a necessary and unilinear narrative that culminates in, and therefore justifies, the constitution of the law. The story of origins is thus a strategic tactic within a narrative that, by telling a single, authoritative account about an irrevocable past, makes the constitution of the law appear as a historical inevitability.203

Or, as Butler would argue, the origin of the law is in fact a historical fiction. This however does not deny the power that the law has over the social construction of gender identities.

Butler claims that in order for the political project of enlarging the scope of possible gender configurations to succeed, the contingency of gender construction must be revealed. In examining this issue Butler will here interrogate the notion of the law, as well as the relationship of psychoanalysis and structuralism to this notion. Like Irigaray, Butler both appropriates and critiques the tools of psychoanalysis. One significant

202 Ibid., 47.
203 Ibid.
critique in *Gender Trouble* centers around the connection between Lacan and Levi-Strauss through Lacan’s appropriation of Levi-Strauss’s structuralist notion of the Law. Butler argues that for Lacan “the Law which forbids the incestuous union between boy and mother initiates the structures of kinship, a series of highly regulated libidinal displacements that take place through language. Although the structures of language, collectively understood as the Symbolic, maintain an ontological integrity apart from the various speaking agents through whom they work, the Law reasserts and individuates itself within the terms of every infantile entrance into culture.”

Butler claims that

> To ask after the very ‘being’ of gender and/or sex in Lacanian terms is to confound the very purpose of Lacan’s theory of language,” … [for] “Lacan disputes the very primacy given to ontology within the terms of Western metaphysics and insists upon the subordination of the question ‘What is/has being?’ to the prior question “How is ‘being’ instituted and allocated through the signifying practices of the paternal economy?”

While she resists the way that Lacan supports patriarchal structures through his appropriation of the concept of the Law, Butler also seems to embrace the notion, elucidated by Lacan, that the condition of the symbolic realm is pre-ontological.

Butler also engages with Freud’s notion of melancholy, claiming that “there has been little effort to understand the melancholic denial/preservation of homosexuality in the production of gender within the heterosexual frame.” She reinterprets Freud’s theory of the Oedipal complex to imply that

> … the boy must choose not only between the two object choices, but the two sexual dispositions, masculine and feminine. That the boy usually chooses the heterosexual would, then, be the result, not of the fear of castration by the father,

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but of the fear of castration – that is, the fear of feminization associated within heterosexual cultures with male homosexuality. In effect, it is not primarily the heterosexual lust for the mother that must be punished and sublimated, but the homosexual cathexis that must be subordinated to a culturally sanctioned heterosexuality.\footnote{Ibid., 75-76.}

She posits that according to Freud’s notion of the ego-ideal “(which regulates and determines masculine and feminine identification) gender identification is a kind of melancholia in which the sex of the prohibited object is internalized as a prohibition. This prohibition sanctions and regulates discrete gendered identity and the law of heterosexual desire.”\footnote{Ibid., 80.}

Butler also engages in a Foucaultian critique of the Freudian logic of gender and identity formation. For Foucault, the notion of the disposition of sexual desire changes through a change in the language of sexual desire. We move from thinking in terms of a verb (to be disposed) to thinking in terms of a noun (to have a disposition). In other words, instead of construing sexual activities as something that we do as already constituted entities, rather our sexual activities take on the power to shape our identity, such that what we do constitutes who we are. The result of this shift is a “false foundationalism, the results of affectivity being formed or ‘fixed’ through the effects of the prohibition [against homosexual desire].”\footnote{Ibid., 81.}

Butler also reflects on Gayle Rubin’s 1975 article “The Traffic of Women: The ‘Political Economy’ of Sex.” She claims that Rubin’s conclusion is that “gender is merely a function of compulsory heterosexuality ... [without which] the field of bodies

\footnote{Ibid., 75-76.}  \footnote{Ibid., 80.}  \footnote{Ibid., 81.}
would no longer be marked in gendered terms.” Butler critiques Rubin’s reading as naïve about the effects of power on gender, suggesting that a post-structuralist reading, using the work of Foucault and Derrida, would assist in revising Rubin’s “narrative of gender acquisition.” Butler endeavors to “reject the postulation of an ideal sexuality prior to the incest taboo,” relying instead on Foucault’s critique of the “repressive-hypothesis” in the *History of Sexuality, Volume I* to argue that the psychoanalytic model fails to take seriously the productive and juridical effects of power on desire.210 Foucault’s view is that rather than a repression of sexuality, the eighteenth century onward (and especially the Victorian era) results in a proliferation of discourses on the “subject” of sexuality. Thus, “sexuality” has become an object of discourse, as well as subject to the truth of this discourse.

Butler claims that “If we extend the Foucaultian critique to the incest taboo, then it seems that the taboo and the original desire for mother/father can be historicized in ways that resist the formulaic universality of Lacan.”211 Ultimately she concludes that “If the incest taboo regulates the production of discrete gender identities, and if that production requires the prohibition [of incest] and sanction of heterosexuality, then homosexuality emerges as a desire which must be produced in order to remain repressed.”212 In other words, the incest taboo is a powerful source of what Butler argues is the social construction of sex itself, of our desires and pleasures. She notes that “Within psychoanalysis, bisexuality and homosexuality are taken to be primary libidinal

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dispositions, and heterosexuality is the laborious construction based upon their gradual repression.”

Butler claims that feminist theory and politics have long relied on “categories of true sex, discrete gender, and specific sexuality” as their starting point. She notes that “These constructs of identity serve as the points of epistemic departure from which theory emerges and politics itself is shaped.” She challenges the notion that there is a unified identity that represents all women. She asks, “What circumscribes that site as ‘the female body’? Is ‘the body’ or ‘the sexed body’ the firm foundation on which gender and systems of compulsory sexuality operate? Or is ‘the body’ itself shaped by political forces with strategic interests in keeping that body bounded and constituted by the markers of sex?”

Following Foucault, Butler is concerned with the problem of “internalization” and its effect on our understanding of identity. She quotes Foucault from *Discipline and Punish*, where he describes how the phenomenon of internalization effects prisoners: “the strategy [of the prison] has been not to enforce a repression of [the prisoner’s] desires, but to compel their bodies to signify the prohibitive law as their very essence, style, and necessity.” Butler interprets the problem of internalization with respect to sex/gender as the normalization of “an idealized and compulsory heterosexuality.” She claims that this functions as a “regulatory ideal” that ultimately is disrupted by “the

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213 Ibid.
214 Ibid., 163.
215 Ibid., 164.
216 Ibid., 164.
217 Ibid., 164.
218 Ibid., 171.
219 Ibid., 172.
disorganization and disaggregation of the field of bodies.”\textsuperscript{219} Bodies that are engaged in non-normative bodily practices serve to expose the regulatory ideal as “a norm and a fiction that disguises itself as a developmental law regulating the sexual field that it purports to describe.”\textsuperscript{220}

She shifts focus here into a discussion of the notion of performativity. She claims that

Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are 	extit{performatie} in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are 	extit{fabrications} manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality.\textsuperscript{221}

So gender is real in the sense that it is produced by discourse and the repetition of acts by the body that in a sense mark it as gendered in a particular way. For example, she argues that imitative practices, such as cross dressing and drag, help to underscore what she calls the “three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance”\textsuperscript{222} She notes that “\textit{In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency}.”\textsuperscript{223} She concludes that the imitative quality of the construction of gender, both in normal gender

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 173.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
construction and in the performative sense of drag, reveals that there is no original or natural identity from which gender is fashioned.\textsuperscript{224}

Indeed, Butler suggests that “gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self.”\textsuperscript{225} In a sense, she comes to this conclusion based on her denial that the body has any natural meaning whatsoever, a claim that seems problematic in light of Irigaray’s concerns about sexual difference. Butler’s position, however, does not necessarily contradict Irigaray as much as it seems on the surface. Both thinkers are primarily motivated by an interest in rethinking the body as an entity produced by a complicated matrix of social factors. While Butler goes too far in \textit{Gender Trouble}, in a sense denying that there is any inherent significance to the materiality of the body, she addresses this critique in her other work, especially \textit{Bodies that Matter}.\textsuperscript{226} There she focuses on the ways in which bodies are materialized through culture, for example through sexual and racial constructions. She claims that the materiality of sex, and similarly of race, is forcibly produced, insofar as bodies are materialized as ‘sexed’ and ‘raced’. In this later text she concludes that ‘sex’ and ‘race’ are ideal constructs, which are forcibly materialized through time.

Ultimately, in both of these works, Butler raises some interesting questions and challenges for Irigaray that must be addressed. For example, Butler critiques Irigaray’s

\textsuperscript{224} \textit{Ibid.}, 175-176.
\textsuperscript{225} \textit{Ibid.}, 176.
analysis of the “monolithic masculinist economy” of broad-reaching epistemological, ontological and logical structures as overly sweeping in its reach. Butler’s concern is that by failing to address the concrete “cultural and historical contexts” in which sexual difference proliferates, Irigaray risks repeating the “self-aggrandizing gesture of phallogocentrism, colonizing under the sign of the same those differences that might otherwise call that totalizing concept into question.” Butler believes that Irigaray fails to be sufficiently self-critical about her own tendencies to over-generalize real and significant differences between women. Butler seems to agree with Monique Wittig’s critique that Irigaray’s analysis “recirculate[s] a mythic notion of the feminine.”

In addition, Butler questions the usefulness of Irigaray’s attempts to develop a specific feminine sexuality that exists outside of the “terms of the phallic economy.” Butler’s concern is that Irigaray fails to stipulate whether such a feminine sexuality is something that exists “‘outside’ of culture as its prehistory or as its utopian future.” Butler, adopting a Foucaultian analysis, suggests that sexuality is constructed within power relations which make it impossible to conceptualize a sexuality, feminine or otherwise, that exists prior to or beyond the reach of the matrix of power.

Butler, as well as the other theorists whose work is outlined here, raises pressing questions about the relationship between the Western metaphysical tradition and the philosophical and social systems which support patriarchal structures. I will reexamine these concerns in Chapter Five. First, however, I turn to a further exposition of

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228 Ibid., 35.
229 Ibid., 40.
Lonergan’s philosophy, in particular his accounts of human knowing, human living, and dynamic metaphysics. In Chapter Five, I will show how his philosophy, in particular his articulation of the dynamic structure of the human mind and the universe itself, helps to mediate some of the concerns raised by the feminist theorists whose work is examined here in Chapter Two.
Chapter Three:
Lonergan and the Patterns of Human Living

I. Introduction

In *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Lonergan proposes to discuss the nature of human knowing. This discussion takes place in an unusual fashion, for Lonergan claims that his “aim is not to set forth a list of the abstract properties of human knowledge but to assist the reader in effecting a personal appropriation of the concrete, dynamic structure immanent and recurrently operative in his own cognitional activities.”230 In other words, Lonergan endeavors to elucidate “insight into insight.”231 By insight, Lonergan understands “not any act of attention or advertence or memory but the supervening act of understanding.”232

Yet as Lonergan liked to say, insights are a “dime a dozen” and the process of appropriating one’s own cognitional activities inevitably leads to the notion of judgment. Hence Lonergan also endeavors to elucidate the act of judging. First, he notes that judging involves affirming or denying, an “answering yes or no to a question for reflection.”233 Second, judgment involves making a personal commitment, “a judgment is the responsibility of the one that judges.”234 As knowers we make both true and false judgments for which we are responsible when we answer a question for reflection. This possibility of judgment – the final product of the cognitional process - occurs when we reach what Lonergan calls the “virtually unconditioned.” Insights are conditioned, in

232 *Ibid*.
effect, by the questions for reflection that are driven by the inquiring mind. As long as our questions remain unanswered, we cannot come to a sufficient judgment about the truth or falsity of our insight. However, our judgment becomes virtually unconditioned when we face a concrete question, and when we pursue our inquiry until we uncover all further relevant questions, and we satisfactorily answer those further questions. In this way, the conditions of our original insight are fulfilled, and our judgment becomes “virtually unconditioned.”

II. The Activity of Insight

According to Lonergan, the key moment in the human process of coming to know is the act of insight. Lonergan outlines the structure of the event of insight. Insight occurs, suddenly and unexpectedly “as a release to the tension of inquiry.” It occurs not as a function of outer circumstances but inner conditions; it pivots between the concrete and the abstract, and subsequently, passes into the habitual texture of one’s mind.

Insight does not occur spontaneously, for it requires antecedent desire and effort on the part of the knower. Even so, neither can it be transmitted by learning rules, or following precepts. Insight is an act of discovery, which is something that cannot be taught, but must be generated by the discoverer. Lonergan remarks “were there rules for discovery, then discoveries would be mere conclusions.” His point here is that every

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236 Ibid., 5.
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid., 4.
act of intelligence is a form of discovery, one that each knower must reach by him or herself.

While insight is a particularly human activity, it is not to be confused with the mere act of sensation. Lonergan wryly notes that “The occurrence and the content of sensation stand in some immediate correlation with outer circumstance … But … insight depends upon native endowment and so, with fair accuracy, one can say that insight is the act that occurs frequently in the intelligent and rarely in the stupid.”239 What is it that distinguishes the intelligent from the stupid? The frequent occurrence of insight, which “depends upon a habitual orientation, upon a perpetual alertness ever asking the little question ‘Why?’”240

Intelligence is displayed in our orientation, in what some might call ‘intellectual curiosity’. Within those persons for whom insight is a frequent occurrence, there burns a strong curiosity, a basic dissatisfaction with the state of ignorance. For Lonergan, as for Aristotle before him, this type of orientation is the result of the deep and particularly human experience of wondering. Wonder alone, however, won’t necessarily result in an insight. The occurrence of insight also “depends on the accurate presentation of definite problems.”241 This means that in order for curiosity to become understanding, our wondering must be expressed in a concrete manner.

Lonergan understands wonder as a primordial drive, a desire to understand that typifies human experience and acts as a dynamic force to push us towards discovery.

239 Ibid., 5.
240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
Lonergan refers to this primordial drive as ‘pure question’. What makes the question pure is that it is prior to any insights, concepts, or words. As Lonergan notes, “insights, concepts, words, have to do with answers; and before we look for answers we want them; such wanting is the pure question.”242 Pure question is not abstract, however, because when we wonder it is always about some particular thing, perhaps concrete data encountered through sense experience, or even the concrete wanderings of our imagination. So, while insights are grounded in the concrete, “the significance and relevance of insight goes beyond any concrete problem and application … Thus by its very nature, insight is the mediator, the hinge, the pivot. It is insight into the concrete world of sense and imagination.”243 It is this hinge offered by insight that lays the foundation for the possibility of building understanding through the process of learning.

This process of learning involves groping in the dark and gradually building a chain or web of small insights. “Imperceptibly we shift from the helpless infancy of the beginner to the modest self-confidence of the advanced student.”244 This accretion of insights makes up what Lonergan calls the “habitual texture” of our minds. Before this accretion has occurred, we must undergo the process of learning and development that generates the originary, basic insights of infancy and childhood. Children wonder, asking the implicit question “what is it” of objects encountered within the world.

Wondering and questioning start from our experience of data through our sensory activities. We collect data through the senses. From these sensory experiences, we

\[\text{\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 9.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 6.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.}\]
construct images. These images are not only visual, for we can also imagine how things feel, sound, smell or taste. Sense experiences and the images we cull from them are necessary for insight. The grasp of intelligibility that constitutes insight occurs in the discovery of unities among diverse, concrete particularities of images. Unlike the raw and sometimes chaotic experience of sense, the grasp of intelligibility unites sensible components into a pattern. Insight allows one to grasp an invisible pattern that orders the visible difference.

Just as experiences form the point of departure for insights, so also insights are the points of departure for conceptualization. While concepts are important, they are not imposing or inflexible. In fact, Lonergan declares that “conception is the playground of our intelligence.”245 Whereas Kant, for example, understands concepts as formal and rigid, Lonergan claims that concepts are “constituted by the mere activity of supposing, thinking, considering, formulating, defining.”246 This multi-faceted process of conceptualization is nevertheless an organized part of the thinking process, for conceptualization never occurs at random, but always together with an act of insight. Ultimately, conceptualization is driven by our taking notice of some clue to the relationship between the concrete and the abstract. The recognition of such a clue is the product of concrete insights into data, constituted by discovery of the intelligible pattern that exists beyond the realm of sense. Consider, for example, a swimmer who is trying to improve the speed of his backstroke. He usually wears baggy swim trunks to practice, but one day he decided to wear a sleek, tight fitting suit. Doing so, the swimmer

245 Ibid., 8.
246 Ibid.
improves his time dramatically. In questioning why he was able to swim so much faster, the swimmer has the insight that the only change in the data is the new swim suit. His insight into the concrete data of the relationship between the suit and faster time ‘pivots’ on the concept of “drag,” the resistance of the water to the swimmer’s movements. The swimmer supposes that the new, sleek suit is responsible for his new time, because his old, baggy suit produced greater resistance in the water. This insight depends upon the recognition and definition of the concept of drag or resistance.

All of this is the result of a process in which imagination cooperates with intellectual effort in order to satisfy the demands of wonder. The ultimate achievement of this process is that question and insight, image and concept come together in a “patterned set of concepts” that provide the answer to our original question. The ultimate standard that must be met by insight is the fulfillment of the concrete question derived from wonder. If we continue to feel the desire to know and continue to ask further questions because we are not yet satisfied, then the drive to know has not been quelled. Conversely, if we reach understanding, for example in formulating a definition, then for the moment one particular, concrete question has been fulfilled.

Lonergan outlines two types of definitions that express our insights in different ways. Nominal definitions inform us about using names correctly, while explanatory definitions include a further insight into the intelligibility of whatever object is being defined. Both types of definitions suppose insights, but while a nominal definition

\[247\text{ Ibid., 10.}\]
“supposes no more than an insight into the proper use of language,” an explanatory definition “supposes a further insight into the objects to which language refers.”

For Lonergan, “Every definition presupposes some other term.” So where does the process of defining begin? He argues against the notion that “either definition is based on undefined terms or else terms are defined in a circle so that each virtually defines itself.” Instead he claims that definitions are contextual, they “emerge in solidarity with experiences, images, questions and insights.” When it comes to insight, the important factor is that various concepts cohere in order for one to grasp the intelligibility of the relations between the terms. Lonergan explains that

… for every basic insight there is a circle of terms and relations, such that the terms fix the relations, the relations fix the terms, and the insight fixes both. If one grasps the necessary and sufficient conditions for the perfect roundness of this imagined plane curve, then one grasps not only the circle but also the point, the line, the circumference, the radii, the plane, and equality. All the concepts tumble out together, because all are needed to express adequately a single insight. All are coherent, for coherence basically means that all hang together from a single insight.

This experience of things “hanging together” forms the “aha!” moment we so often associate with insight. The act of insight captures the event of recognition of intelligibility, while the process of development is an accrual of many of these events. Lonergan claims that once a sufficient number of new insights develop as a result of any process of inquiry, a shift can take place. This shift occurs through the emergence of a steady stream of related questions, and the development of further insights and
definitions, postulates and deductions which fulfill these questions. This “complex shift in the whole structure” of one’s knowing is what Lonergan identifies as the emergence of a higher viewpoint.\textsuperscript{253} To illustrate this notion he discusses the transition from very elementary arithmetic into elementary algebra. This transition begins with a “homogeneous expansion.” This expansion constitutes a vast extension of an “initial deductive expansion. It consists in introducing new operations. Its characteristic is that the new operations involve no modification of the old.”\textsuperscript{254}

Lonergan’s example of such an expansion is drawn from arithmetic and algebra. Still, one could also think about the process of learning to read or play music, starting out with scales, building from the mastery of simple songs eventually to complicated ensemble pieces that require vast understanding of harmony, tempo and rhythm.

Whether we are exploring algebra or Chopin, our insights always serve as a pivot or hinge between the image and the concept, between the concrete data and the abstract intelligibility. So, in order to understand what it is to understand such things as mathematics and music, we must first learn to be attentive to the data of our own understanding. Data falls into two types -- data of consciousness, as well as data of sense, which Lonergan identifies as “the [contents] of an act of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling.”\textsuperscript{255} So in addition to understanding the data of our sensations, we do wonder about and endeavor to understand the data, the experience, of our own consciousness of understanding.

\textsuperscript{253} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., 73.
III. Regarding Data

For Lonergan, data is what is presupposed by inquiry, in other words, we only notice data *qua* data once we have begun to wonder about it. To be more precise, Lonergan claims that “Inquiry presupposes elements in knowledge about which inquiry is made.”\(^{256}\) These elements in knowledge are the data about which we wonder. Lonergan describes the level of data as the level of ‘presentations,’ which is “presupposed and complemented by the level of intelligence, that it supplies…the raw materials on which intelligence operates, that … it is empirical … merely given, open to understanding and formulation but by itself not understood and in itself ineffable.”\(^{257}\)

Lonergan’s account of data is not univocal, however, for he distinguishes between ‘sensible data’ and ‘data of consciousness’; the two are related, but distinct. Data of sense pertain to the flow of the experience of sensation, Lonergan states “A datum of sense may be defined as the content of an act of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling.”\(^{258}\) This sensory experience gives rise to the data of consciousness, which “consist of acts of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, judging, and so forth.”\(^{259}\) It is these data that are the basis for the cognitional process, which is oriented toward seeking out intelligibility in the universe.

Not all data are clearly intelligible, however. Lonergan notes an additional category that references elements in the data which refuse our effort to make them

\(^{257}\) *Ibid.*
\(^{258}\) *Ibid.*, 73.
concretely intelligible. This category is named the ‘empirical residue.’ According to Lonergan, “because the difference of particular places and the difference of particular times are given prior to any questioning and prior to any insight, because these given differences cannot be matched by insights that explain why places differ and times differ, there has to be introduced the category of the empirical residue.”260 He defines empirical residue as that which “(1) consists in positive empirical data, (2) is to be denied any immanent intelligibility of its own, and (3) is connected with some compensating higher intelligibility of notable importance.”261 Elements in the empirical residue are not objects of any direct insight. For example, particular places and/or particular times, which differ as a matter of fact, and within which exists no immanent intelligibility to be grasped by direct insight into that fact, are distinguishable only by empirical residue. The empirical residue as such lacks any intelligible pattern. Therefore, the very fact of difference in place or time produces differentiation. Lonergan notes that if place and time did not involve some underlying empirical residue, “every place and time would have its own physics, its own chemistry, its own biology.”262 He sums up this notion of the empirical residue, “In brief, individuals differ, but the ultimate difference in our universe is a matter of fact to which there corresponds nothing to be grasped by direct insight.”263

Unlike the empirically residual aspects of our experiences, the intelligibility of data in general can be grasped by direct insight. These insights are mediated, however, by our ability to pattern our sense experiences. Sense experience can be chaotic.

260 Ibid., 27.
262 Ibid., 28.
263 Ibid., 29.
Consider the barrage of sensations one experiences fighting through a crowded train station at rush hour, the deafening thunder of the approaching train, the overpowering smells of cologne, body odor, food from vendors, the shock of being bumped and pushed by harried passengers to get a seat on the crowded train. There are too many sensory experiences for one person to process them all simultaneously. Why and how, then, do some elements of this barrage reach consciousness out of the vast reserves of experiences of one’s own body, while many other elements do not?

The answer to this query is our orientation – that with which we are concerned at any given moment - which determines how our experiences are patterned or shaped. Insight will arise, but it has to await this primary level of experiential patterning in order to add a higher intelligible patterning. Thus, within human experiencing, the images that rise to the surface, as well as the insights that order these images, do not occur randomly. There is some order to the selectivity of images that are allowed to emerge. This ordering of images has several sources, but among the most important sources are the personal orientations derived from social and cultural constructions that select out of the raw sensory experience collected in everyday living. This is important for understanding the nature of insight, for the patterning of images is foundational to the process of understanding. The process of developing understanding does not occur in a vacuum. Human beings are social creatures, and our development of knowledge is shaped and patterned, although not completely determined, within our social environment. In order to better understand these relationships, as well as the other patterns that affect the
development of understanding, Lonergan examines the four concerns that organize human life and human knowledge.

IV. The Patterning of Human Experience

For Lonergan, to the extent that it is not distorted by bias, human living involves a gradual, steady accumulation of common sense insights. This accumulation occurs through processes of informal teaching and learning, talking and doing, and emulating others. He claims, “In this fashion, the discoveries and inventions of individuals pass into the possession of many, to be checked against their experience, to undergo the scrutiny of further questions, to be modified by their improvements.”264 This modification of insights occurs in a communal self-correcting process of learning, through which human intelligence develops specialized knowledge of the particular and the concrete. Such development of intelligence occurs in tandem with the general patterning of human experience, in which various elements of our experience are organized into distinct patterns. These elements of experience have a bodily basis and are functionally linked to bodily movements. The selection and the patterning of sensations and bodily movements are controlled by consciousness, by its orientation, interest, attention and purpose. Consciousness governs the patterns of experiencing that mold human living.

264 Ibid., 175.
Lonergan describes four patterns of experience: the biological, aesthetic, intellectual and dramatic. These represent the various patterns which invite questions and insights. Patterning of experience is dynamic, and varies according to the particular orientation of the individual at a given moment. In the next section, after giving a brief outline of the biological, aesthetic and intellectual patterns, I will focus on the dramatic pattern of experience in order to explain how this pattern functions, especially in relation to neural demand functions.

V. The Four Patterns

Lonergan states that the stream of human consciousness “involves not only the temporal succession of different contents, but also direction, striving, effort.” It is this dynamic striving of consciousness that gives order to the psychic flow of experience. The first pattern that Lonergan discusses is the biological. It consists of four main elements: outer senses, which serve as the heralds of biological opportunities and dangers; memory, our repository of supplementary information; imagination, which aids in the projection of courses of action; and conation and emotion, which represent the “pent-up pressure of elemental purposiveness.”

A biological pattern of experience is a “set of intelligible relations that link together sequences of sensations, memories, images, conations, emotions, and bodily

movements,” the end of which is the reproduction or preservation of an organism.\textsuperscript{268} In addition, non-conscious immanent vital processes fit into intelligible patterns of biological significance, for example various organic functions such as digestion, or cell metabolism. This patterning is considered biological because the flow of these relations is oriented toward the biological flourishing of the organism.

At an intentional level, the biological pattern is characterized primarily by extroversion. Elementary biological experiencing is concerned not with the immanent aspects of living but with its external conditions and opportunities. Exigencies within the biological conjugates orient biological consciousness towards its “external conditions and opportunities,” such as the challenges of a harsh environment or an immediately available bounty of food or some other necessity.\textsuperscript{269}

A second kind of experiential patterning is the aesthetic. Within the aesthetic pattern, experience moves beyond the limited purposiveness of biological consciousness. The aesthetic pattern instead captures the spontaneous authenticity of conscious living. Art is powerful as it serves both to liberate human beings from biological purposiveness, and to “[liberate] intelligence from the wearying constraints of mathematical proofs, scientific verifications, and common-sense factualness.”\textsuperscript{270} In opposition to the calm focus of the intellect, art captures the spontaneous joy of free intellectual creation. Art serves to invoke, through symbol, meaning which cannot be understood through the detached and disinterested approach of theoretical inquiry. Art gives expression to the

\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid., 184.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., 185.
aesthetic subject, expressing the dynamic orientation of wonder. For Lonergan, “man’s artistry testifies to his freedom.”

Conversely, a third pattern, the intellectual pattern, shapes one’s experiencing in such a way as to serve the development of the detached, disinterested demeanor of the intellect intent upon particular lines of inquiry. This pattern is best observed in the theorist concentrating thoroughly upon a problem, censoring any image or clue which is irrelevant to the question at hand, and focusing completely on the insights and judgments sought. In this transformation of sensitive spontaneity, there occur acts of reflection in which arise a passionless calm.

While the intellectual pattern shapes our experiencing as we pursue theoretical endeavors, ordinary human living is not restricted to only one pattern of experience. Unlike the detached, disinterested approach of the theoretician, our everyday life is a stream of consciousness that involves not only succession, but direction, a practical drive oriented toward getting things done in the social world. Lonergan names this orientation of everyday life the dramatic pattern of experience.

The dramatic patterning of consciousness organizes everyday human experience. The dramatic pattern aims to serve common sense in order to “get things done” but also to shape and orient human living so as to dignify human experience. Lonergan notes that it is possible to detect a dramatic component in the motives and purposes behind

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271 Ibid.
272 Ibid., 186.
273 Ibid., 187.
274 Later, he more carefully distinguishes the practical and the dramatic patterns. The dramatic patterning is governed by interpersonal (dramatic) concerns.
275 Ibid., 187.
human action, for in human living the higher patterns elevate the lower functions. This is accomplished by the transformation of the biological into the social. For example food preparation and the act of eating are dignified by spatial and psychological separation, clothing is worn with dramatic flair rather than to simply cover and protect, and sex is not considered merely for purposes of procreation, but rather “becomes a great mystery, shrouded in the delicacy of indirect speech.”

As human beings going about our everyday lives, we act out what Lonergan calls the “drama of living,” a drama grounded in the freedom granted to human beings through art, as the ability to shape our lives through artistry liberates us from the bonds of biological purposiveness. For Lonergan, the first work of art of any human being is his or her own living. He claims that “The fair, the beautiful, the admirable is embodied by man in his own body and actions before it is given a still freer realization in painting and sculpture, in music and poetry.” This artistry is accomplished insofar as we are constantly constructing and revising a dynamic network of social relations. Human beings shape their social lives through a dramatic sort of artistry which is “limited by biological exigence, inspired by example and emulation, confirmed by admiration and approval, sustained by respect and affection.” We shape our behavior and interactions with others within a dynamic intersubjective context, and therefore our social relations are never fixed or predetermined.

276 Ibid. Or, as in contemporary culture, sex is treated as public entertainment, a marketing tool, or individualistic hedonism.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid., 188.
The drama of human living is transitive; not only do we shape our social relations, but we too are shaped by the drama acted out in social life. This is an evolutionary process, through which an individual’s character is formed. The process is both voluntary and involuntary, working at both the conscious and unconscious levels. The dramatic pattern operates through the collaboration of intelligence and imagination in order to shape our behavior in society. In the dramatic pattern, the intelligibility of particular sensible components of our experience is grasped under the conditions of the artistic imagination. In turn, intelligence unites these sensible components into the dramatic pattern of experience. Following Aristotle, Lonergan points out that the formation of human character involves rational deliberation. In the development of the dramatic pattern of experience, we draw upon insights and processes of self-correction (rationality) to impose an artistic pattern upon, and thereby transform, the basic aggressivity and affectivity of our experiencing. Such dramatic patterning underlies what is usually called rational consciousness, which is a specialization of the intellectual patterning of experience.

This shaping of consciousness, however, is not directly analogous to the artist’s shaping of clay. Our bodies cannot be treated like the raw material of the artist because in humans “there exist the exigencies of underlying materials, and the pattern of experience has to meet these exigencies by granting them psychic representation and conscious integration. The biological cannot be ignored and yet, in man, it can be transformed.”279 Conation and emotion, the “pent-up pressure of elemental

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279 Ibid., 187.
purposiveness” are immanent within the basic materials which the biological pattern shapes.²⁸⁰ Thus, unlike the materials of the artist, the materials which emerge in consciousness are already dramatically patterned. Insofar as these underlying neural demands are transformed through our own pains and joys, the dramatic patterning of experience differs from ordinary drama. We are not only actors portraying a role; we are also authors and directors. Our efforts require more.

This transformation of the biological is a universal human variable, occurring in every culture, albeit with radically different results. And yet, there are many similarities in the way such transformation happens. Dramatic artistry, as opposed to the purely aesthetic pattern, occurs in the presence of others. Others, too, are actors in this “primordial drama,” a drama which is shaped by the fact that human beings are social animals. We seek the appreciation, approval, respect, affection, guidance and friendship of others, while in our weaker moments we may also treat others with disrespect, act out in anger, and perhaps even do harm. As this process has been repeated throughout history, human knowledge and artistry has accumulated over the centuries. This accretion results from a process of imitation and learning from others, which leads to collaboration between people in their roles as dramatic actors. This network of human social relations is grounded in “aesthetic liberation and artistic creativity, where the artistry is limited by biological exigence, inspired by example and emulation, confirmed by admiration and approval, sustained by respect and affection.”²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 183.
²⁸¹ Ibid., 188.
While human beings are actors in this drama of living, the drama itself also shapes and molds us through a concrete process of cognitional development. Throughout our lifetime, insights emerge that organize our imaginative projects. These insights are corrected through a process of trial and error, which gives rise to further questions and produces further corresponding insights. This ongoing dramatic process of discovery and development shapes human character by presenting us with possibilities and choices to which we must respond. “Out of the plasticity and exuberance of childhood through the discipline and play of education there gradually is formed the character of [a person].”\textsuperscript{282} This process of formation is guided by rational consciousness, but we are not completely and utterly free to choose. We are marked with our attitudes that are created by our past behaviors and to which we become habituated. In our everyday living, our imagination and intelligence collaborate to formulate particular courses of action. This collaboration is effected by the dramatic pattern which outlines “how we might behave before others and charg[es] the outline with an artistic transformation of a more elementary aggressivity and affectivity.”\textsuperscript{283} Ultimately, the work of the dramatic pattern is to sort out “the materials that emerge in consciousness [which] are already patterned, and the pattern is already charged emotionally and conatively.”\textsuperscript{284} This underlying relationship which the dramatic pattern organizes is between the psychic and the neural. It is important to note here that Lonergan’s understanding of consciousness differs from Freud. What Freud means by “consciousness” Lonergan means by “understanding.” For Lonergan,

\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid., 189.
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid.
consciousness is experience, so only that which is brought to consciousness can contribute to the process of creating images for insights. Electrical impulses that occur within the brain, for example, are not automatically brought to awareness within everyday life. For Lonergan, the unconscious is the neurophysiological level. He explores this in his notion of the neural demand functions.

VI. Neural Demand Functions

In order for the dramatic patterning of experience to function, the unconscious neurophysical level must be brought under the control of the conscious psychic level. Lonergan calls this the “subordination of neural process to psychic determinations.”

Unlike animals, which have a limited ability to learn new skills, human beings have a tremendous capacity to change and shape our bodily movements in an untold number of ways by means of our dynamic patterning of our experience. Lonergan concretizes this notion with the example of learning to play an instrument, “Were the pianist’s arms, hands, and fingers locked from birth in natural routines of biological stimulus and response, they never could learn to respond quickly and accurately to the sight of a musical score.” In this example, the psyche controls and determines the neural, but in general the neural patterns and processes also demand psychic representation and conscious integration. For example, if one places a hand upon a hot stove, the patterns of the neural functions will demand of the psyche a corresponding experience of pain.

neural stimulus-response mechanism will also demand for one to pull one’s hand off of the hot stove. Lonergan illustrates this notion with the less vivid example of sight, in which “patterns of change in the optic nerve and the cerebrum specify and lead to corresponding acts of seeing.” \(^{287}\) He links this example to all of the outer senses, and presumes that “memory and imagination, conation and emotion, pleasure and pain” also arise in coordination with specific demands of neural processes.\(^{288}\)

While neural patterns and processes “call for some psychic representation and some conscious integration,”\(^{289}\) their demands can be fulfilled in various ways. We have some control over our psychic responses. Unlike animals, humans are not restricted to a merely biological patterning of experience, in which both the unconscious and the conscious have the same end. Rather, our possibilities are vast and change as frequently as our concrete situation, as well as the habitual texture of our minds. Of course, our possibilities are not completely unlimited. While all neural patterns and processes demand some form of conscious expression, they are conditioned by and contingent upon the particularities of the situation in which we find ourselves – for example, the realities of our bodily strengths and limitations, our physical environment, and our cultural situation - as well as the pattern of experience in which the demands are met.

Within the biological pattern, there is little room for the “diversification of psychic contents,” while in the aesthetic pattern, there are vast possibilities for change, dictated for example by location, time period and social setting, although these

\(^{287}\) Ibid., 190.  
\(^{288}\) Ibid.  
\(^{289}\) Ibid.
possibilities aren’t unrestricted. The aesthetic and dramatic patterns of experience differ from the biological, insofar as they both “[penetrate] below the surface of consciousness to exercise their own domination and control and to effect, prior to conscious discrimination, their own selections and arrangements.” However, like the other patterns, the domination of the dramatic pattern over consciousness is limited by the requirement to heed the demands of neural patterns and processes.

This is so because the demands made by neural processes constitute an exigence immanent within any organism, which in turn requires expression in some complementary way at the conscious level. This exigence is not purely oriented toward knowing. Lonergan notes that “The imperious neural demands are affective rather than apprehensive.” This means that they are oriented not toward the “apprehensive psychic contents, but for the conations and emotions that are far more closely linked with activity; thus while we imagine much as we please, our feelings are quite another matter.” Lonergan warns that if we violate the exigence constituted by the neural demands we shall “invite the anguish of abnormality.” In order to avoid such anguish human beings must strive to be in accord with both the normative function of our own intelligence, as well as with what is intelligible in the norm of our societies. Failure in this respect courts the stigma of rejection.

290 Ibid.
291 Ibid., 195.
292 Ibid.
293 Ibid., 191.
294 Later Lonergan argues that social norms are not pure, but are a mixture of intelligible solutions to human living along with unintelligible dictates originating from biases. See in particular the discussion of group bias in Lonergan, *Insight*, 222-225.
In light of such a possibility, Lonergan examines the development of dramatic bias, which arises from an exclusion or refusal of insight. Just as we can experience bias at the theoretical level, so too can “elementary passions … bias understanding in practical and personal matters.”\textsuperscript{295} The result of dramatic bias is a behavior that serves to restrict the pure unrestricted desire to know in dangerous and damaging ways. Bias excludes insights and leads to narrow and distorted viewpoints. This causes us to behave in ways that create error and misunderstanding within the individual and the community. These sorts of misunderstandings lead the individual to withdraw from the drama of community life into the inner world of fantasy.

Extroversion is native to the biological pattern of experience. The inward turn that results from bias subverts the extroverted dynamic of the biological pattern of experience, and results in a distorted differentiation within the individual between the \textit{persona}, our outer self which is allowed to appear before others, and our inner \textit{ego}, the internal, private impression one has of oneself. Ultimately this failure of integrity leads to “incomprehension, isolation, and duality,” the arrested and aberrant development of common sense, and aberration of the process of development in general.\textsuperscript{296} In this differentiation that occurs in turning away from the outer drama of human existence, the individual becomes disconnected and as a result loses the opportunity for learning in cooperation with others.

Lonergan uses the term “scotosis” to name this flight from understanding. Scotosis is a bias that retards the development of dramatic common-sense insights and

\textsuperscript{295} \textit{Ibid.}, 191.
\textsuperscript{296} \textit{Ibid.}
understandings. In turn, scotosis results in a sort of “blind spot” which Lonergan calls a 
scotoma. Scotosis is an unconscious process that arises from the censorship which guides 
or inhibits the “emergence of psychic contents.” Scotosis and the resulting scotoma 
occur by means of the “spontaneous exclusion of unwanted insights.”297

In addition, the expansion of scotosis usually requires that the individual 
undertake a process of rationalization. When Lonergan discusses “rationalization of the 
scottoma,” he does not refer to rationality in the general sense of being rational. Rather, 
this rationalization is an attempt to fit irrational, non-sensical ideas into the scheme of the 
scottoma. For example, the wife who suspects her husband of being unfaithful (but 
doesn't want to believe it) smells unfamiliar perfume on his collar. She may try to 
rationalize her insight, thinking, “He must have been squirted with perfume at a 
cosmetics counter,” when she knows very well he hates to shop and never goes into a 
store unless he absolutely cannot avoid it. There is no rational justification for this 
conclusion, as it conflicts with her previous insights. She knows he hates to shop, but 
rationalizes that he was at a cosmetics counter because she wants to exclude the insight of 
his possible unfaithfulness. Thus, in scotosis, we may simply diminish unwanted insights 
as incorrect, or we might flee the unwanted insight in an “emotional reaction of distaste, 
pride, dread, horror, revulsion.”298 This sort of scotosis can remain unconscious and yet 
the scotoma can bubble up to the surface.

This example illustrates how the flight from understanding and the process of 
rationalization create the scotoma. Working in tandem with scotosis is the process of

297 Ibid.
298 Ibid., 192.
repression. Scotosis results in an aberration of the understanding, but also of the censorship or abstraction that allows us to put together the proper images and clues that form an insight. The desire to avoid an insight results in the repression from consciousness of the particular questions, images or clues that would bring the insight into consciousness. Censorship is primarily constructive; it “selects and arranges materials that emerge in consciousness in a perspective that gives rise to an insight.”

Yet censorship also has another, negative side, selecting what to leave out. This negative function is important because it “dictates the manner in which neural demand functions are not to be met.” In addition to positive and negative censorship, Lonergan also discusses aberrant censorship; both censorship and its aberrant form “regard directly not how we are to behave but what we are to understand.” Lonergan associates the aberrant form of censorship with the obstruction of understanding that results from repression.

Specifically, Lonergan defines repression as an “exercise of the aberrant censorship that is engaged in preventing insight.” Repression results in an inhibition of neural demand functions which in turn prevents insights from arising. This is accomplished by suppressing the demand for images (and any connected affects) which could point to the unwanted insights. These insights are unwanted because they lead to the correction and revision of our current viewpoints and behavior. According to Lonergan, this flight from understanding, “grounds the conscious, affective attitudes of

\[\text{Ibid.}, 192.\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, 193.\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
the persona performing before others, and it also involves the repression of opposite combinations of neural demand functions.” The same is true for the ego, and so those demands “make their way into consciousness with the affect detached from its initial object and attached to some other more or less incongruous object.”

Thus, both repression and inhibition, as functions of scotosis, serve to “defeat the efforts of the dramatic actor to offer a smooth performance” by the division of conscious living into the persona and the ego. This disruption of refined performance occurs because the sentiments of the ego, which are fantastical and private, can slip into the public performance of the persona. For instance, we are subject to what are commonly referred to as “Freudian slips” or “slips of the tongue” in which the higher level of consciousness fails to bring the lower level into accord. This sort of failure can function in many circumstances in which the lower finds expression despite the attempts of the higher to inhibit its expression. For example, many forms of ordinary neurosis often become habitual.

Thankfully, we are not always required to perform, whether on the public stage of the persona, or the private theater of the ego. Rather, we are given the opportunity to slip away from these demands into the world of sleep. In sleep is accomplished the relaxation of censorship, as well as the restoration of nerves both physically and chemically, as well as psychically. The neural demand functions, as determinant of conscious contents in an awake state, have a strong influence over our dreams. Dreams meet the “ignored claims

303 Ibid.
304 Ibid., 194.
305 Ibid.
of neural demand functions\textsuperscript{306} and as such preserve the freedom of the aesthetic, intellectual and dramatic patterns of experience. In the dramatic pattern, unlike the biological pattern, these higher integrations are not enslaved to the neural demands. For Lonergan, the ultimate function of dreams is to secure a “balance between neural demands and psychic events while preserving the integrity of the conscious stream of experience.”\textsuperscript{307}

Dreaming has an effect on the person one becomes while awake. While we are dreaming, we can push our imagination to its limits and explore the full spectrum of our experience. While we are awake, however, we are not so free, for we are held accountable for our actions. Thus, in light of the dramatic pattern, we must question the development of moral norms. As we have already pointed out, the development of human character involves a process of rational deliberation. In addition, Lonergan points out that conscience and moral feeling arise in part by the “determination of judgment in accord with the feelings instilled through parental and social influence.”\textsuperscript{308} This calls into question the relation between emotion and rational judgment.

According to Lonergan, “Normative objectivity is constituted by the immanent exigence of the pure desire in the pursuit of its unrestricted objective.”\textsuperscript{309} Objectivity, in Lonergan's sense, is deeply connected with the pure desire to know. Therefore, to completely detach the cognitional process from all desire and emotion would virtually end the cognitional process, for it would separate us from the pure question. It would

\textsuperscript{306} Ibid., 195.
\textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 196.
\textsuperscript{308} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid., 380.
also separate us from the data of feelings. It is necessary to understand and critique our feelings and it is necessary to ground our feelings in our insights. Otherwise we would develop completely irrational emotions, like people who make rash judgments and enter into irrational fits of temper. Still, this does not mean repressing emotions. If we are to strive to be objective it requires us, beginning at the level of the dramatic subject, to develop a heightening of desire and emotional involvement in order to intelligently and critically integrate feeling into our living. This is particularly important for moral character, which develops with regard to both feeling and reflection, within the context of the dramatic patterning of experience. As Lonergan asserts with regard to moral development, “Once feeling takes the lead, critical reflection can prevent an arbitrary extension of the moral code.” So moral feeling guides us, for example, towards what draws us in as joyful and uplifting or away from that which shocks and disgusts us. Reflecting critically on our feelings and moral choices allows us to develop a moral code that is reasonable and does not violate our basic sensibilities, both as an individual and within the larger realm of society.

Thus the dramatic patterning of experiencing is an important and complicated process. In order for humans to function in accord with the norm created by the spontaneous and dynamic phenomenon of wonder, experience must be patterned in particular ways. This requires that the higher psychic and intellectual conjugates of experience must be in accord with the lower biological and neurological conjugates. If this does not occur properly we will be likely to suffer from psychological disorders and

\[310\] Ibid., 199.
the incomplete or aberrant development of moral character. Hence through neural
demands, biological conjugates have psychic representation, which is accomplished
through the dramatic patterning of human experience.

It will be demonstrated in Chapter Five how the dramatic patterning of human
experience is relevant to questions of sex and gender. First, however, I will develop an
account of Lonergan’s complex and dynamic notion of metaphysics, as well demonstrate
how this approach to metaphysics is significant for a theory of development.
Chapter Four:
Metaphysics as Emergence

I. Introduction

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Lonergan develops a complex philosophical account of the human being. This chapter will show that Lonergan’s understanding of the human being deeply informs his understanding of metaphysics, and as a result he rejects a deductive metaphysics based in logic and conceptualism. Instead, he claims that, distinct from theoretical accounts of being developed by philosophers and theologians through the history of Western intellectual culture, there exists a spontaneously operative notion of being which is common to all human beings. This spontaneously operative notion is what Lonergan calls the “intention of being,”311 and is identified as “the pure desire to know” discussed in Chapter One. In order to understand what Lonergan means by metaphysics, then, we must first revisit his understanding of this notion of being and its relation to human intelligence.

Lonergan’s effort in the second chapter of Insight is to highlight the essential dynamism of human intelligence, especially with regard to scientific method. In undertaking scientific inquiry, we do not follow a plan, for a plan assumes a known end or goal. A method, conversely, is based in questions and inquiries which aim at the “known unknown.” Method, in this sense, rests upon the fact that we are driven to discover that which we do not yet understand or know. Insights emerge; they are novel and spontaneous, never planned. For Lonergan, there is a dynamism, most evident in

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311 Lonergan, Insight, 355.
science, that is characteristic of the human mind in general. Moreover, the dynamism of the mind in turn corresponds to the dynamism of the universe.

Wonder and questioning underlie not only classical scientific investigation, but also all of the operations of the human mind. Lonergan wants us to attain a critical understanding of wondering and questioning in order to appropriate our irrepressible orientation toward intelligibility. This is a far more comprehensive heuristic orientation than is found in classical science. We expect to discover, to have insights and make judgments, not only regarding scientific investigations, but about everything. Philosophy, as well as science, begins in wonder, not in propositions. Wonder is the dynamic operator that pushes us toward this comportment. For Lonergan, this comprehensive heuristic orientation is a normative experience of human existence and the genuine ground of metaphysics.

II. The Notion of Being

As discussed in Chapter One, Lonergan speaks of a notion rather than a concept of being. Understanding what he means by this term is of great importance for understanding Lonergan’s view of the cognitional process, of metaphysics, and of the universe itself. For him, the universe is like the cognitional process in that both are dynamic. The cognitional process arises out of the deep and spontaneous orientation of the knower to wonder about the unknown.

Lonergan calls this orientation the “desire to know” and says that by this he means
the dynamic orientation manifested in questions for intelligence and for reflection … the prior and enveloping drive that carries cognitional process from sense and imagination to understanding, from understanding to judgment, from judgment to the complete context of correct judgments that is named knowledge.\textsuperscript{312}

This orientation is what Lonergan means by “the notion of being”. He does not approach being conceptually, but anticipatorily. Lonergan does not think of being as the content of a concept, but rather as the not yet known community of everything that is. As such his notion of being is not rigid, nor is it even formed like an idea. Rather the notion of being is the way that the orientation toward the universe of being operates the cognitional process of the knower. He uses the term ‘notion’ to suggest an open-ended, unrestricted comportment, rather than a formed concept or understanding. This orientation arises out of the experience of wonder. Lonergan argues that this spontaneously operative notion of being, which is common to all knowers, operates irrespective of the theoretical accounts of the genesis and content of being as developed by philosophers and theologians throughout the history of Western intellectual culture. This notion of being is demonstrated by the experience of wonder, an experience which Lonergan finds to be ubiquitous. He notes “Neither centuries of inquiry nor enormous libraries of answers have revealed any tendency for the stream of further questions to diminish.”\textsuperscript{313}

For Lonergan, wonder is the expression of intelligent inquiry, which transcends basic sensitive experience. He calls wonder the “hinge” or “pivot” because it serves to connect, or in a sense mediate, between merely sensitive living (expressed in the biological pattern of existence) and intelligent inquiry. Wonder frees intellectual activity

\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., 348.  
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid., 638.
from the prison of the biological pattern through its important function of anticipation.

Through wonder and inquiry we anticipate being, we anticipate the “to-be-known through that content.” We anticipate the particular content of a particular known, but we also anticipate the totality of being. Lonergan describes this anticipation accordingly, “Hence, prior to all answers, the notion of being is the notion of the totality to be known through all answers.” This anticipation also enables wonder to perform its role of selection; it “selects data for insight.”

As wonder transcends sensitive experience, the notion of being constitutes some contents as cognitional, as opposed to merely experiential. Insofar as our wondering about things extends beyond what we know so far, so does the notion of being. It is not in wondering about things that we come to know them, though. In order to reach knowledge of being, we must first reach insights and then judgments, in which we affirm or deny the existence or reality of a thing. As Lonergan puts it, “until we are ready to affirm or deny, we do not yet know whether or not any X happens to be.” While the act of judging allows us to affirm or deny the fact of a thing’s existence, judgment does not constitute the notion of being. This notion is our intention of being prior to any act of judging. This intending depends on our wondering and reflecting about things in the first place. It is expressed in the question “is it so?” to which judgments respond. So we must conclude that the notion of being exists, in fact, prior to our making judgments.

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314 Ibid., 356.
315 Ibid.
316 Ibid., 353.
317 Ibid.
The question of the relation between being and existence is certainly a live one in the history of philosophy. There are many things that we can think about, but not all of them can be affirmed to exist. Some therefore conclude that thinking prescinds from existence, and therefore from being. This would result in a reduction of thinking about being to thinking about nothing, and led some philosophers to the conclusion that being and existence must be different things. Lonergan disagrees with this conclusion, arguing that it is judging, not thinking, that allows us to reach a determination about the fact of something’s existence. We can think, imagine or fantasize about things that don’t exist, but ultimately one aim of thinking is to make a determination about whether those things that we think about actually exist. This means that the notion of being goes beyond merely thinking about things, toward making a determination or judgment about their actuality. Lonergan concludes that the notion of being is prior to thinking, as well as to judging.

III. The Metaphysics of Finality and Emergent Probability

Corresponding to the dynamism of the human subject’s mind, Lonergan identifies a correlative dynamism of the universe of being itself, which he calls “finality.” Lonergan identifies an isomorphism between knowing and being, and therefore between the cognitional and the metaphysical. The relentless inquiry which sustains all cognitional acts is reflected in the universe and therefore has great metaphysical importance. As normal human inquiry is headed toward the intelligibility of being, the subject/object split that has been so problematic through the history of philosophy
disappears in the isomorphism between knowing and being. This means that human beings, as self-reflective inquiring subjects, are not limited to biological consciousness. There is more to the real than the dualistic already-out-there-now reality of presence endemic to biological consciousness. We can recognize and affirm this fact through appropriating our own cognitional process. Hence, becoming a metaphysician requires self-appropriation, for we have an intrinsic norm within us that guides us toward the dynamic being of the universe. In order to respect this norm we have to pay close attention to and appropriate our own process of knowing.

The central feature of Lonergan’s metaphysics is therefore what he calls the notion of finality. Insofar as we are inquiring, we are incomplete, unfinished. When we inquire we are also participating in the finality that moves the universe and ourselves upward, toward a fuller and more differentiated way of being. Our desire to know and understand being is unlimited, yet the limits of our possible experience restrict our ability to fulfill that desire. Proportionate being is therefore the more restricted realm of being, limited by sensitive experience. We as human knowers can come to the realization that we are limited by our horizon, our experience, and our historicity, for we also can recognize that there are questions about realities that may exist beyond the realm of possible human experience. This does not mean that we can have no knowledge or understanding of these realities. Rather, the question of the limit of human knowledge and understanding remains an open question for metaphysical inquiry. Be that as it may, the primary focus of Lonergan’s metaphysics is the natural universe, or what he calls
“proportionate being.” Finality is the fundamental feature of this universe of proportionate being.

Lonergan speaks of finality as an objective process which is “the becoming of proportionate being.”\(^{318}\) He claims that there exists a parallel between this objective process and cognitional activity.

By finality we refer to a theorem of the same generality as the notion of being. This theorem affirms a parallelism between the dynamism of the mind and the dynamism of proportionate being. It affirms that the objective universe is not at rest, not static, not fixed in the present, but in process, in tension, fluid. As it regards present reality in its dynamic aspect, so it affirms this dynamism to be open. As what is to be known becomes determinate only through knowing, so what is to be becomes determinate only through its own becoming.\(^{319}\)

Thus, reality is an open dynamism, grounded in potency, and revealed through finality.

In a general sense, finality reflects the fact that the whole order of proportionate being is emerging. Metaphysically and objectively, finality corresponds to human wondering. Like human inquiry, the whole universe of proportionate being is on the move. Indeed, “Its [cognitional process’] heading towards being is but the particular instance in which universal striving towards being becomes conscious and intelligent and reasonable.”\(^{320}\) But finality is not limited to human consciousness; it embraces the whole universe. Significantly, though, finality attains self-awareness in human wondering insofar as we wonder about everything that is emerging, including ourselves and our own capacity for wonder.

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\(^{319}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{320}\) *Ibid.*
Lonergan characterizes his notion of finality with the remark that proportionate being is “upwardly but indeterminately directed.”\textsuperscript{321} Such a notion is only possible in a metaphysics in which substance is not a rigid determiner of what is. If substance were a rigid determiner of being, then being would be determinately directed. This would make impossible any change or flexibility in the universe of being. Indeed, it would mean that emergence was itself impossible. It would mean that the universe was static, that the “nature” or existence of things was wooden and fixed. In Lonergan’s view the universe is real and the real is dynamic. Perhaps most importantly, this means that we live in a universe that is incomplete.

This does not mean, however, that the universe of proportionate being is without direction. In this dynamic universe, potency is directed toward form and form toward act. In addition, the accidental coming together of diverse events (“acts”) sets the stage for the emergence of new, novel forms and further events/acts. This directedness of the universe of being is not inflexible, because within the directed dynamism of finality, non-systematic divergence is possible. This non-systematic divergence reveals that “The directed dynamism of finality is not determinate.”\textsuperscript{322}

On the human side, our capacity for wonder is an expression of finality within the knowing subject. On the side of the universe, the expression and structure of finality is what Lonergan calls “emergent probability.” Central to the notion of emergent probability is Lonergan’s principle of emergence. He observes,

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{321} \textit{Ibid.}, 452. \\
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{322} \textit{Ibid.}, 447.
\end{footnotesize}
The prototype of emergence is the insight that arises with respect to an appropriate image; without the insight, the image is a coincidental manifold; by the insight the elements of the image become intelligibly united and related; moreover, accumulations of insights unify and relate ever greater and more diversified ranges of images, and what remains merely coincidental from a lower viewpoint becomes systematic from the accumulation of insights into a higher viewpoint.323

With the emergence of insights, the dynamism of the mind offers a prototype; emergence is far more general, emergence is the principle of intelligible unity. This principle of emergence is the foundation for Lonergan’s discussion of the higher integrations of lower manifolds. Emergence occurs out of manifolds of things which are initially related only coincidentally, but which become systematized by higher forms and integrations.

The more universal phenomenon of the emergence of intelligibility in the universe is treated in Lonergan’s analysis of schemes of recurrence. According to this analysis, events and things exist within ever emerging “flexible circles of ranges of schemes” of recurrence.324 This means that events and things, including human beings, are intrinsically interrelated metaphysically in an ever-developing emergent universe. On a basic level, schemes of recurrence include the circulation of water over the surface of the earth, the routines of animal life, the repetitive, economic rhythms of production and exchange.325 These are examples of single schemes, but single schemes are only single components in “conditioned series” of schemes of recurrence. Lonergan illustrates series of schemes with the example of the dietary schemes of animals: “All carnivorous animals cannot live off other carnivorous animals. Hence, a carnivorous, dietary scheme

323 Ibid., 481.
324 Ibid., 462.
325 Ibid., 118.
supposes another herbivorous dietary scheme, but, inversely, there could be herbivorous animals without any carnivorous animals."\(^{326}\) In other words, certain schemes are conditioned by the existence of other schemes, but not all schemes are dependent upon another for their existence.

Additionally, he distinguishes between possible, probable and actual seriations that result in schemes of recurrence. Actual seriation refers to “schemes that actually were, are, or will be functioning in our universe along with precise specifications of their places, their durations, and their relations to one another."\(^{327}\) Actual schemes can be tracked; their existence is a fact. Whereas an actual seriation exists in fact, a probable seriation exists as an ideal, and not in fact. Rather, probable seriation has to exhibit the cumulative ramifications of probable alternatives. Accordingly, the probable seriation is not a single series, but a manifold of series. At each stage of world process\(^{328}\) there is a set of probable next stages, of which some are more probable than others. The actual seriation includes only the stages that occur. The probable seriation includes all that would occur without systematic divergence from the probabilities.\(^{329}\)

Probable seriation, Lonergan notes, is governed by both the classical and statistical laws that regulate our world. Conversely, possible seriation is not dependent on statistical law. Rather, it “… includes all the schemes of recurrence that could be devised from the classical laws of our universe … Of the three seriations, then, the possible exhibits the greatest complexity and variety."\(^{330}\) Lonergan’s basic idea here is that schemes of

\(^{326}\) Ibid., 119.
\(^{327}\) Ibid.
\(^{328}\) This is Lonergan’s own term and not to be confused with any form of Hegelianism or process philosophy.
\(^{329}\) Ibid.
\(^{330}\) Ibid., 119-120.
recurrence will emerge and survive not necessarily, but only probably, and when they do, they make probable still further emergences.

‘Emergent probability,’ therefore, is the concrete manifestation and structure of the finality of the universe. This is a central notion for Lonergan’s thought, one which he considers to be an “explanatory idea.”\textsuperscript{331} The explanatory importance of emergent probability comes into clearer view when we consider the claim that there exists a “world process in which the order or design is constituted by emergent probability.”\textsuperscript{332} For Lonergan ‘world process’ is a very concrete notion which refers to “a spatio-temporal manifold of events.”\textsuperscript{333} Still, world process is no mere random flux. It has a structure which is governed by both classical and statistical laws. For this reason, world process is moved along by the organizing factor of emergent probability.

IV. The Notion of Objectivity

Since the era of Kant and his contemporaries, the problem of objectivity has become the problem of how it is possible to know how reality really is, apart from the construction and imposition of the mind in its attempts to know the real. For Lonergan, the answer to this problem comes in what he calls the principle notion of objectivity.

Objectivity relates to the notion of being through the crucial role of making judgments. Being is “what is to be known in the totality of true judgments.”\textsuperscript{334} On the other hand, Lonergan notes that “Objectivity in its principal sense is what is known

\textsuperscript{331} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{332} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{333} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., 376.
through any set of judgments satisfying a determinate pattern. In brief, there is
objectivity if there are distinct beings, some of which both know themselves and know
others as others."\(^{335}\) This knowledge is achieved through making judgments, and
ultimately affirming them as correct. This will occur only if the knowing subject
practices both intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, leading eventually to one’s self-
affirmation as a knower. This, however, is complicated by the fact that human existence
is fraught with tension arising from the differentiated patterns of experience which
govern human living. For Lonergan, it is this fact, the polymorphism of human
consciousness, which is the problem underlying any attempt to develop a method of
metaphysics.

While people regularly make judgments, they cannot necessarily give a full or
correct account of “their knowledge of objects and subjects."\(^{336}\) Commonly, we fall into
an explanation that relies on our biological sense of the reality of objects, rather than our
knowledge of those objects. Lonergan describes this biological viewpoint as awareness
of the “‘already-out-there-now-real’."\(^{337}\) The already-out-there-now is the notion of
objectivity and reality inherent in what Lonergan calls the “biological pattern of
experience.”\(^{338}\) It is a notion of objectivity and reality, which privileges “presence”

\(^{335}\) Ibid., 377.
\(^{336}\) Ibid., 376.
\(^{337}\) Ibid., 252. Lonergan equates this kind of awareness with biological consciousness and defines it as
follows: “‘Already’ refers to the orientation and dynamic anticipation of biological consciousness; such
consciousness does not create but finds its environment; it finds it as already constituted already offering
opportunities, already issuing challenges. ‘Out’ refers to the extroversion of a consciousness that is aware,
not of its own ground, but of objects distinct from itself. ‘There’ and ‘now’ indicate the spatial and
temporal determinations of extroverted consciousness. ‘Real’, finally, is a subdivision within the field of
the ‘already out there now’: part of that is mere appearance; but part is real; and its reality consists in its
relevance to biological success or failure, pleasure or pain” (Lonergan, Insight, 251).
\(^{338}\) Ibid., 182.
(‘already’, ‘there’, ‘now’). Animal consciousness has no concern for what is absent, since it cannot serve biological needs. But human knowing is concerned with everything that can be understood and judged – most of which is not immediately present. Since the imperiousness of immediate biological purposiveness can interfere with the broader concern of human knowing, this differentiation or polymorphism of consciousness is a principle challenge in the development of a proper meaning of metaphysics.

To place him within the history of philosophy, one could say that Lonergan deviates from Thomistic metaphysics not in its content, but in the way that it has been interpreted over the centuries. He thinks that what we need to know about being, about thinking, about metaphysics is in Aquinas’ writings, but interpretation of Aquinas’ “account of wisdom in cognitional terms” has been interfered with by the “polymorphism of the human consciousness.” Lonergan’s critique is that philosophers and theologians have not inquired deeply enough into human understanding to work out the truth of the Thomistic account.

The human mind is polymorphic insofar as it exists in or assumes different forms, for example, the differentiated patterns of experience discussed earlier. Polymorphism is rooted in patterns of experience. The intellectual pattern is the only “pure” pattern, in which we let inquiry lead wherever it may. This is not an undistracted state, but rather a state in which our inquiry is radically open, radically unclosed-off. The genuinely intelligent inquirer must detach from anything limited for the sake of everything unlimited. The problem of polymorphism gives rise to general bias, which is the tendency

339 Ibid., 407.
to allow the practical pattern to undermine and/or overwhelm the theoretical and other patterns of experience.

The first important judgment that relates to this understanding of the mind is the affirmation that “I am a knower.” Still, this affirmation must be situated within a context of further judgments about other objects. We affirm the existence of other objects; we also affirm the difference between those objects and ourselves. Perhaps more importantly, we are also able to “intelligently grasp and reasonably affirm the existence of other knowers” who differ from ourselves. If we are correct in our judgments, then we validate the notion of objectivity, for it is composed of the set of judgments that correctly affirm objects and subjects.

Lonergan notes three aspects of objectivity. First, the experiential aspect which is “proper to sense and empirical consciousness”; next the normative aspect which arises out of tension between the desire to know and subjective desires and inclinations; and third the absolute aspect which is “contained in single judgments.” If a judgment affirms some intelligibility to be consistent with an experience, then the reality must have components corresponding to experiencing, understanding, and judging.

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340 Ibid., 376.
341 Ibid. Within the field of phenomenology, this notion of objectivity is understood as the problem of intersubjectivity, or the intersubjective constitution of objectivity. It is perhaps most famously addressed by Edmund Husserl in his *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. D. Cairns, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1931). Husserl is concerned primarily with the problem of solipsism, insofar as recognition of another subject spurs us to question the validity of our own view of the world. Lonergan avoids this problem in his claim that affirmation of objectivity arises out of judgments, which can be collectively affirmed by various subjects.
342 Ibid., 375.
Lonergan points out that people frequently jump to the conclusion that our knowledge of objects is evident through the obvious experiential aspect of knowing. It is not unusual for persons to utter a statement such as ‘I know X is real because I can feel it, touch it, hold it in the palm of my hand, etc.’ This however is a mistaken conclusion, for the correct affirmation of objectivity requires more than mere experience. Human knowing is complex, as is the notion of objectivity. Experiencing, understanding and acts of judgment must coalesce into a “pattern of judgments … [for] prior to judgment one can think of being, but one cannot know it; and any single judgment is but a minute increment in the process toward knowing it.” In order to reach the affirmation of objectivity, this pattern of judgments is dependent upon a very particular act of affirmation. Lonergan argues that the complete notion of objectivity addresses the problem of transcendence, also referred to as the problem of solipsism. He states

On the one hand, we contend that, while the knower may experience himself or think about himself without judging, still he cannot know himself until he makes the correct affirmation, I am. Further, we contend that other judgments are equally possible and reasonable, so that through experience, inquiry, and reflection there arises knowledge of other objects both as beings and as being other than the knower. Hence, we place transcendence, not in going beyond a known knower, but in heading for being within which there are positive differences and, among such differences, the difference between object and subject.

Thus, Lonergan asserts that insofar as we engage in the act of reaching and affirming this complex pattern of judgments about the existence of distinct beings, we both affirm objectivity and create transcendence.

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V. Metaphysical Terms: Potency, Form, and Act

While Lonergan relies on the traditional metaphysical vocabulary of potency, form, and act, he reinterprets these terms. For Lonergan, potency “denotes the component of proportionate being to be known in fully explanatory knowledge by an intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue.”\(^{347}\) The intellectual patterning of empirical residue requires an attentiveness to diversity and multiplicity, such as when the knowing subject wonders ‘Why is there so much of all this?’, whether a particular concrete ‘this’, or ‘thisness’ generally. The experience of potency is of a complete radical openness to experiencing everything about everything. Potency is experience transformed by wonder, with intellectual curiosity patterning the sum of human experience. The knowing subject experiences wonder as the often-uncomfortable tension of the desire to know, to such an extent that Lonergan describes the human subject as a “concrete unity in tension.”\(^{348}\) Potency describes both radical intelligible possibility, and a radically open diversity that reflects the difference and multiplicity which constitute the universe of being. Ultimately, potency reflects the experiencing of multiplicity as potentiality.

Form, on the other hand, reflects an understanding not of limitless multiplicity, but of limited possibility. As we move from potency to form, wonder gives way to understanding. Form determines; Lonergan claims that form “denotes the component of proportionate being to be known not by understanding the names of things, nor by understanding their relations to us, but by understanding them fully in their relations to

one another.”349 So while potency corresponds to the way in which we experience the vastness of the universe, form corresponds to our ability to understand things primarily in terms of relatedness. Still, understanding and the formulation of a definition of relatedness do not guarantee that we have accurately determined the actual relations that we are seeking. Insight, the act of the intellect that produces the content of the understanding expressed in form, narrows the field by placing conditions on the object of inquiry. By itself, however, insight cannot confirm with certitude that its conclusions are correct.

With that affirmation of accuracy, one enters the realm of act. Act “denotes the component of proportionate being to be known by uttering the virtually unconditioned ‘Yes’ of reasonable judgment.”350 Act is related to form, for judgment refers always to the content of some insight, which in turn relates to our experience of the world expressed in potency. It is reflective insight paired with judgment that enables us to claim with certainty that we have understood correctly and truly. Reflective understanding enables us to “utter the virtually unconditioned ‘Yes’ of reasonable judgment.”351 This is the ultimate outcome of the cognitional process, in which inquiry transforms experience into correct understanding.

Thus, for Lonergan, potency, form and act constitute a unity that is reflected in the cognitional process itself. Before we can arrive at an affirmative judgment we must first have some experience of what is to be known, we must inquire into and develop a

349 Ibid., 432.
350 Ibid.
351 Ibid.
(potentially flawed) understanding of its nature. Gradually overcoming these flaws in understanding, one moves toward a virtually unconditioned judgment of the corrected understanding of experience. Potency, form, and act constitute a single known; they reflect the three separate levels of cognitional activity that are unified as a single knowing, that comes to fruition in the knower’s affirmation of the unconditioned. As such, potency, form, and act are “three components of a single proportionate being.”\textsuperscript{352} The understanding that is reached in affirming a judgment is a singular definition or specification shared by potency, form, and act.

Lonergan quickly differentiates the general account of potency, form and act into two general classes: conjugate potency, form, and act, and central potency, form, and act. Conjugate potency, form, and act have to do with intelligible relationality. Conjugates are terms defined implicitly by their empirically verified and explanatory relations. These terms are conjugate forms that are verified in the empirical residue of experience, and constitute unities with conjugate potencies and acts. Conjugate potency refers to the facts of spatio-temporal relatedness that exist as aspects of the empirical residue, while conjugate act refers to the ‘occurrence’ of facts that effect the relations between data.\textsuperscript{353} Conjugate forms detail similarity and yield explanatory power by explaining how data is related to other data.

Conjugate forms differ from another kind of form that pertains to the intelligible unity of data as individual. Lonergan names this ‘central form’, in which the knower

\textsuperscript{352} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid., 435-437.
grasps the “intelligible unity, identity, whole” of concrete, individual data. Like conjugate form, central form also constitutes a unity with central potency and central act. Central potency refers to the “individuality of the empirical residue,” while central act refers to the “existence” of the intelligible unity.

VI. Metaphysics and Development

While emergent finality is a general metaphysical feature of the entire universe, certain beings within the universe exhibit an even more structured kind of finality that Lonergan calls “development.” He defines development generally as “the linked sequence of dynamic higher integrations.” More specifically, development is “a flexible, linked sequence of dynamic and increasingly differentiated higher integrations that meet the tension of successively transformed underlying manifolds through successive applications of the principles of correspondence and emergence.” The course of development is capable of both major and minor flexibility. Minor flexibility suggests that development “can pursue the same ultimate goal along different routes.” Major flexibility “consists in a shift or modification of the ultimate objective. In biology … adaptation, in depth psychology … sublimation, in cognitional activity … the manner in which inquirers, often enough, begin from one problem only to find themselves by the logic of issues forced to engage in the solution of another.”

354 Ibid., 435.
355 Ibid., 437.
356 Ibid., 452.
357 Ibid., 454.
358 Ibid., 453.
359 Ibid., 453 - 454.
Emergence, along with correspondence and finality, are for Lonergan the basic principles of development. Correspondence means that “significantly different underlying manifolds require different higher integrations.”\textsuperscript{360} For example, the human patterns of hearing and sight are the resulting higher integrations of differing neural structures and events in the eye and ear. Higher integrations of lower, differing coincidental manifolds take different forms, both static and dynamic. An integration is static when it “dominates the lower manifold with complete success and thereby brings about a noticeable imperviousness to change.”\textsuperscript{361} The result of a static integration is stability. For example, a highly stable chemical element such as neon is the highly stable integration of electron motions which resists forming bonds to create additional chemical compounds. Conversely, a dynamic integration is “not content to systematize the underlying manifold but keeps adding to it and modifying it until by the principle of correspondence, the existing integration is eliminated and, by the principle of emergence, a new integration is introduced.”\textsuperscript{362} For example, during the pupa stage, a caterpillar so drastically alters its own chemical composition that the body of a moth is needed to reintegrate it.\textsuperscript{363} Both emergence and correspondence are related to the notion of finality, in which “The underlying manifold is an upwardly but indeterminately directed dynamism toward ever fuller realization of being.”\textsuperscript{364}

Biology, psychology and cognitional theory study three types of development:

Organic development, psychic development and intellectual development. Biologically,
in the organic event of cell division, we can distinguish between reproduction and
growth; reproduction is a “multiplication of life” while growth is an instance of
development. Describing this development, Lonergan claims that “Higher integration is
on the move, for growth is not merely an increase in bulk, but also an increase in
differentiation.”365

Whereas organic development applies to organisms generally, psychic
development is limited to animal organisms. Unlike lower organisms, “the animal in its
development has to include the genesis and patterned distribution of neural tissues …
neural differentiation and structure provide a material basis for a sequence of increasingly
complex forms of sensitive consciousness.”366 According to Lonergan, there are two
types of psychic development, differentiation and integration. He claims that

The multiplication of particularized nerve endings grounds a possibility of
increasingly differentiated sensible impressions and sensitively guided
components of movement. The mounting hierarchy of nerve centres grounds the
possibility of ever more notable integrations of impressions and ever more
diversified co-ordinations of response.367

The most complex realization of this development occurs in the human animal, which has
the capacity to attain “a richly diverse and highly integrated sensitive consciousness.”368
Differentiation may be more highly developed in an animal,369 but a human being has a
far greater power of integration.

365 Ibid., 454.
366 Ibid., 455.
367 Ibid., 455-456.
368 Ibid., 455.
369 For example, in a canine’s highly developed sense of smell.
“Neural development,” Lonergan claims, “merely supplies the underlying manifold for psychic development.”\textsuperscript{370} Psychic development is conditioned by neural development, “but it consists neither in neural tissues nor in neural configurations nor in neural events but in a sequence of increasingly differentiated and integrated sets of capacities for perceptiveness, aggression or affective response, for memory … imaginative projects, and for skillfully and economically executed performance.”\textsuperscript{371} This does not always function perfectly. Lonergan offers the illustration of a person who suffers from multiple personalities as an example of abnormal integration. He claims that “the higher integration of sensitive consciousness can so interact with its neural basis as to generate different and incompatible integrations.”\textsuperscript{372}

Perhaps the best example of the notion of development is intellectual development. Human intelligence develops through a cognitional process in which we grasp images, and are pressed, through the tension of inquiry, to integrate them intelligibly through the act of insight. In turn, our desire to know moves us toward further questions. As a result, we discover and investigate further data and reach further insights. This process is in effect for all fields of human knowledge and understanding, from commonsense endeavors to mathematics, science and philosophy.\textsuperscript{373} In all of these, as well as all other fields, “development is a flexible, linked sequence of dynamic and increasingly differentiated higher integrations that meet the tension of successively

\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 456.
\textsuperscript{371} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid., my emphasis.
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid., 458.
transformed underlying manifolds through successive applications of the principles of correspondence and emergence."\textsuperscript{374}

Generally speaking, the universe emerges through schemes that are flexible, but which are directed or oriented by finality. In emergent probability, schemes emerge randomly, providing the foundation for development. Lonergan notes that “It is emergent probability that provides the compound conditioned series of things and of schemes of recurrence such that the developing organism or psyche or intelligence will have an environment in which it can function successfully.”\textsuperscript{375} Unlike the random emergence of schemes, in development the integrator/operator emerges developmentally, purposefully. Like the phoenix bird, it undermines its own existence in order for the next level to emerge. This occurs at all levels of development, including the organic, psychic and intellectual.

VII. Concrete Instances of Development: Organic, Psychic, and Intellectual

Lonergan’s discussion of the metaphysics of human development provides the crucial link for engaging with feminist writers. But according to Lonergan, human beings develop simultaneously on at least three levels. Therefore, in order to bring Lonergan’s work into dialogue with the feminist concerns dealt with here, we need to consider these lines of development, beginning with the organic.

\textsuperscript{374} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid., 462.
Organic Development

The study of organic development begins with the experience of and inquiry into thing-for-us: the organism. That study begins with the anatomy of the organism, a “… descriptive differentiation of different parts.” Anatomy leads to physiology, by which we are able to “relate the described parts to organic events, occurrences, operations. By these insights the parts become known as organs.” In order to connect anatomy and physiology we must “relate the capacity-for-performance of each part to the capacities for performance of the other parts.” We must move forward from the thing-for-us based upon insights that grasp parts as described. For example, the bones in the inner ear are described metaphorically as the ‘anvil’ and the ‘stirrup,’ because they share a perceived likeness to these objects. We move toward the thing-in-itself, by which Lonergan means parts in their relationships to other things - toward “insights that grasp described parts as organs.” In making this move, we drop the use of metaphor, because metaphors now distract us from understanding “insights that grasp conjugate forms systematizing otherwise coincidental manifolds of chemical and physical processes.”

Organisms function within flexible circles of schemes of recurrence based upon physiological laws that account for the regularities that exist within the higher organic system, regularities beyond the explanatory range of physical and chemical laws. These schemes must not contradict the related set of capacities for performance of the organic parts/organs. For example, on the organic level, when a cell poisons itself it cannot

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376 Ibid., 464.
377 Ibid.
378 Ibid.
379 Ibid., my emphasis.
380 Ibid.
sustain its own operation, and cannot survive. If the related set of capacities for performance of the organic part is not to be contradicted, the cell ought not poison itself with toxins. Similarly the psyche ought not do so to its underlying nerve cells, and the mind ought not do so to its own psyche.

The transposition of anatomy and physiology to the thing in itself reveals an underlying manifold of cells, chemical processes, and physical changes as components in what Lonergan describes as the “organism as higher system” as integrator.\textsuperscript{381} He makes it clear that the organism as higher system is to be understood as the historically interrelated set of conjugate forms. First, the knower studying the physiology of the organism would grasp a set of functions (conjugate forms) interrelating to the organs of the organism. Next this set of conjugate forms as higher system/integrator also is related to the “physical, chemical, and cytological manifold.”\textsuperscript{382} In other words, these conjugate forms are related to one another, but also emergent in organic parts through which the relations that make up the organism can be reconstructed. The conjugate forms that make up the higher system (the organism) create regular, predictable occurrences in an underlying manifold, the parts of which are otherwise related only coincidentally. And lastly, the organism as higher system serves as “… the ground of the flexible circle of ranges of schemes of recurrence,” through participating in activities within its environment.\textsuperscript{383}

\textsuperscript{381} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{382} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., 464-465.
The higher system, at any stage of development, is therefore an integrator. Higher system serves as an integrator, for example, through the simultaneous interlocking of parts, such as in the skeletal system, or at the cellular level through homeostasis, which maintains a state of organized functioning. The data of the integrator, as well as the procedure for studying it, is very complex. This procedure includes collecting data on the integrator by studying its parts, identifying the functions of those parts, identifying how these functions interrelate and thereby grasp the “flexible circle of ranges of schemes of recurrence” that arises from them, and identifying the “underlying physical and chemical manifolds” that apply to the organism as integrator. This means that we must first attend to the data on the integrator and second try to understand the data.

But the higher system is also an operator. That is, “it so integrates that underlying manifold as to call forth, by the principles of correspondence and emergence, its own replacement by a more specific and effective integrator.” While the higher system as integrator expresses the maintenance of living processes, the function of the operator is modification. The data on the operator are data on different modes of integration within the organism at different stages of development. The relevant heuristic structure is “specify the operator.” This means gaining insights into how the higher system as operator effects transitions within the organism from one stage to the next. This is important information to collect because, generally, development means “higher system on the move,” and the higher system is the “ground of the flexible circles of schemes of

384 Ibid., 466.
385 Ibid., 465.
386 Ibid., 466.
recurrence in which the organism functions.” Because the operator effects the emergence of higher-level, modified schemes of recurrence within the organism, the higher system as operator is a highly specialized form of finality, the “upwardly directed dynamism of proportionate being.” This dynamism, however, is still conditioned by instability, incompleteness, and imperfection.

**Psychic and Intellectual Development**

Nearly the same heuristic structure that applies to organic development also applies to psychic and intellectual development, although with certain nuances. In the animal, there exists organic and psychic development. However, in the human animal intellectual development occurs as well. In the organism, the underlying manifold and the higher system are unconscious, while in human intellectual development, both the underlying manifold of sensible presentations and the higher system of insights and formulations are *conscious*. In psychic development, the underlying neural manifold is unconscious but the supervening higher system is conscious. Intellectual development is cognitional, while psychic development “consists in the events and processes of the nervous system.”

Psychic development moves both laterally and vertically. The lateral movement “is an increasing differentiation of the psychic events in correspondence with particular afferent and efferent nerves.” This movement is conditioned by the developing physiology of the nervous system. The vertical movement consists of “… an increasing

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proficiency in integrated perception and in appropriate and coordinate response.”391

While the lateral movement is limited by the physical makeup of the nerves, vertical movement is limited by the way that nerve endings combine to make different operations possible, and the interaction of the nerves with “higher neural centers” which can coordinate the working of diverse neural pathways.392

At a basic level, the conjugate potency for the development of human neurophysiological operation is as follows: first, at the level of potency the nervous system fires synapses, which is a physiological response. Next, at the level of form, selection occurs. This begins the process of integration, or the first level of consciousness – being attentive. Lastly, conjugate act occurs at level of the psychic operator.

Of course at some level, human behavior is also animal behavior. In the behavior of animals in any stage of development, there exists a flexible circle of ranges of schemes of recurrence. Implicit within these are psychological correlations of classical type, and implicit within these would be conjugate forms that are responsible for our habits of perception and response, such as aggression and affectivity. These conjugate forms seem to emerge in our neural configurations.393 The difference, however, between the animal and the human is the plasticity in the way that human neurophysiology can be organized. For example, if we compare a baby raccoon with a baby human, we must note that a baby

391 Ibid.
392 Ibid.
393 Ibid.
raccoon will never learn to perform a perfect plié, because animals are hardwired for a certain psychic integration.

For intelligence, “conceptual construction is the formulated higher system as integrator,” whereas the emergence of the further question serves as operator.\textsuperscript{394} Intellectual development differs from organic and psychic development in interesting ways. First, unlike the previous two forms of development, intellectual development is almost completely free from limitation. This results from the fact that intelligence endeavors to integrate not only the knower, but also the entire universe about which the knower asks questions. In addition, unlike the organism or psyche, both of which aim at pragmatic goals of survival or success, intelligence is largely liberated from such concerns. Intelligence aims at grasping the unconditioned intelligibility of everything about everything.

The psyches and intelligences of humans can be attentive in much more flexible ways than can those of animals. It is through this flexibility that we can talk about humans “constructing” their bodies and their environments. This does not mean some sort of unlimited, infinite flexibility, for it is possible to have incoherent and unintelligent responses to one’s body or environment. It is perhaps on this account that Lonergan could be described as, in a way, “essentialist” insofar as he wants to affirm that we can make distinctions between an intelligent and unintelligent response to experience. Yet he does not want to deny that this response is also constructive. However, judgments about what is a coherent or intelligent response must always take into account the particular,

\textsuperscript{394} \textit{Ibid.}, 469.
concrete situation of the person involved. It would be incoherent for philosophers to make blanket statements about what one ought to do without failing to embrace the most basic of Lonergan’s transcendental precepts, to ‘be attentive’.

It is also important to remember that the ordering of the nervous system occurs within a social drama of meaning. As Lonergan remarks, the “The first condition of drama is the possibility of acting it out, of the subordination of neural process to psychic determination.”\textsuperscript{395} This occurs in multiple ways. Conative, sensitive and emotive elements direct and release our bodily movement. However our bodies are initially detached from these influences and originally are plastic and indeterminate. Our development (of language for example) involves “endlessly complex correlations … between the psychic and the neural.” As we develop, the correlations become “automatic and spontaneous.”\textsuperscript{396} The psychic exerts control over the neural, but neural patterns and processes also demand “psychic representation and conscious integration.”\textsuperscript{397} Lonergan does not discuss this fully, but concludes that “memory and imagination, conation and emotion, pleasure and pain all have their counterparts in corresponding neural processes and originate from their specific demands.”\textsuperscript{398}

These demands are conditioned, however, by our concrete situation, including the conditions of our physiology as well as our patterns of experience. At the conscious, psychic, experiential level, the dramatic pattern selects its own arrangements. This selection at the level of the dramatic, or even aesthetic, occurs among a vast field of

\textsuperscript{395} Ibid., 189.
\textsuperscript{396} Ibid., 189-190.
\textsuperscript{397} Ibid., 190.
\textsuperscript{398} Ibid.
potentialities for the shaping of human life and experience. Playing on the dramatic metaphor, Lonergan writes that “All the world’s a stage and not only does each in his own time play many parts but also the many parts vary with changes of locality, period, and social milieu.” All of these factors, among others, shape the conditions which effect the concrete situation encountered by the dramatic subject. These complex and diverse factors must be brought into balance with the demands of neural patterns and processes which require conscious expression if human development is not to be arrested.

**Human Development**

In each human being, organic, psychic and intellectual development are interlocking processes. Each level is governed by its own laws, schemes of recurrence and conjugate forms. Each form “stands in emergent correspondence to otherwise coincidental manifolds on the lower levels.” As a result, human actions are complicated, and can involve a multiplicity of components which must be in accord with the laws and schemes that are appropriate to govern them. The problem that arises in formulating human development in metaphysical terms is that “higher correlations pertain to systems on the move.” The challenge for the philosopher is to formulate the heuristic categories that pertain to human development, with its “triply compounded” on-the-move structure.

Lonergan claims that the individual human being is, at any stage of development,

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an individual, existing unity differentiated by physical, chemical, organic, psychic, and intellectual conjugates. The organic, psychic, and intellectual conjugate forms ground respective flexible circles of schemes of recurrence that are revealed in the man’s spontaneous and effective behavior, in his bodily movements, in his dealings with persons and things, in the content of his speech and writing.402

As the human being engages in different types (genera) of activity, the patterns of experience emerge, some of which are mutually exclusive, for example the practical pattern and the mystical pattern. This emergence and refinement of patterning is part of the process of developing. In this process, “The flexible circles of schemes of recurrence shift and expand” as we move into successively higher levels of functioning and integration.403 This occurs, in part, because each concrete pattern of experience that is at work in a person’s life serves as an integrator, to maintain the organized functioning of that life. This function does not occur spontaneously. Rather it comes about as a set of conjugate psychic forms that emerge as the result of a long process of development. For example, Lonergan notes that in the dramatic pattern, we elevate the merely biological functions, such as eating, to the level of the social. An infant struggles simply to master the physical task necessary to move food from hand to mouth, but fully functioning adults deftly use complicated utensils within a socially determined realm of meaning, whether it be the multiple forks, knives and spoons set on an elegant Western table, or the delicate chopsticks of the East.

In addition to patterns of experience, the “law of effect” comes into play here, which signifies that “development occurs along the directions in which it succeeds.”404

402 Ibid.
403 Ibid., 471.
404 Ibid., 471.
One who displays no talent for music will not audition for the orchestra, while the
mathematical prodigy who struggles with poetry will likely pursue studies of
computation more so than literature. Significant here is also the “anticipated law of
effect”, which reveals that human development is pushed forward through our
engagement with the world. We ask questions and spur new insights, we desire new
insights so we participate in further investigation.

At issue in human development is what Lonergan calls the “law of integration,”
which highlights the tension between the initiation of development versus integration.\textsuperscript{405} Development is initiated in various ways at various levels. At the level of the organic
“the organism is an upwardly directed dynamism, seeking to be more fully, evoking its
higher integration by calling forth psychic images and feelings” (471). At the psychic
level we discover human sensitivity, a calling forth of value and intersubjectivity, which
is of itself developing. At the intellectual level, wrestling with a puzzling intellectual
problem, or the recognition that another will opposes my own, can also serve as initiators
of development.

Conversely, repression serves as a subversion of development. Because the
human being is a unity, proper human development only occurs when “a new scheme of
recurrence is established in his outward behaviour [\textit{sic}], in his thinking and willing, in his
perceptiveness and feeling, in the organic and neural basis of his action.”\textsuperscript{406} The mere
establishment of such a scheme of recurrence is not sufficient for development. Rather

\textsuperscript{405} \textit{Ibid.}.
\textsuperscript{406} \textit{Ibid.}, 471.
“complementary adjustments and advances” must be put into effect and pushed forward by the direction of the process of development.407

The “law of limitation and transcendence” highlights that fact that there is a “tension inherent in the finality of all proportionate being [which] becomes in man a conscious tension.”408 Psychic and intellectual development is difficult in a being whose temptation is to embrace the comfort of the status quo, but whose potential is to be realized in change and movement. Our greatest possibilities and highest integrations lie in intellectual integration and its dependent psychic integration. Lonergan makes a very important observation in this connection: “Nor are the pure desire and the sensitive psyche two things, one of them ‘I’ and the other ‘It’. They are the unfolding on different levels of a single, individual unity, identity whole. Both are I and neither is merely it.”409 This issue of wholeness is often raised by feminist authors in their critiques of patriarchal systems and cultures. Feminists, for example Simone de Beauvoir, argue that such systems make it difficult, if not impossible for women to reach wholeness, as a result of an association (real or symbolic) of maleness with universality.410 Women, particularly those who embrace cultural ideals of femininity, are often seen as living in tension as a result of being cut off from the universal realm of intelligence and rationality traditionally associated with masculinity.

Lonergan would agree with de Beauvoir insofar as prevailing cultural meanings do not offer meaningful resources to women for full organic, psychic and intellectual

407 Ibid., 471.
408 Ibid., 473.
409 Ibid., 474.
410 See for example de Beauvoir, The Second Sex.
integration. The levels and manifestations of cultural limitation of women’s integration vary between cultures, but exist to some degree almost universally. Lonergan would further argue that the prevailing Western conceptions of intelligence, rationality, and therefore masculinity are limiting for all persons, insofar as these conceptions are impoverished in comparison to his own account of the unrestricted dynamics of human knowing. For this very reason, he would also argue that men, no less than women, must live in the tension of the “law of genuineness” – the tension of constantly taking responsibility for one’s own integral, whole development. And yet, the prevailing culture is more prone to obscure this tension for men, encouraging a type of masculinity that is oriented toward self-assurance and control of oneself and one’s environment.

Unfortunately, in many cultures, women are too often treated as an object within man’s environment, which ultimately can lead to violence perpetrated by men against women (or other males who do not embrace such a standard of masculinity). This ultimately leads to an ethical question, because some women live in cultures so repressive as to mean near certain death for a woman who attempts to take such a responsibility for herself.

Lonergan would claim that tension is experienced by all persons (although he might not dispute that women experience this tension in a different and heightened way.

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411 See for example, Sherry Ortner, “Male is to Females as Nature is to Culture?” In Woman, Culture and Society. Michelle Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist and Louise Lamphere, Editors. (California: Stanford University Press, 1974), 67-87.

412 For example, in some fundamentalist Islamic cultures, women who are raped are in danger of being murdered by their male family members, as a cultural means to protect family honor. See for example Jan Goodwin. Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World. (New York: Penguin, 1995).
than many of their male counterparts). His argument is that the experience of this tension within human beings leads to the law of genuineness. In realizing that such tension exists with a human being, we are led to raise the question, can a self-conscious human being develop in a genuine way? What might that mean? Insofar as there is a tension in human consciousness, Lonergan claims that

Genuineness is the admission of that tension into consciousness, and so it is the necessary condition of the harmonious co-operation of the conscious and unconscious components of development. It does not brush questions aside, smother doubts, push problems down, escape to activity, to chatter, to passive entertainment, to sleep, to narcotics. It confronts issues, inspects them, studies their many aspects, works out their various implications, contemplates their concrete consequences in one’s own life and in the lives of others.  

Such genuineness is ideal and rare, as is the possession of true intelligence and wisdom. As the human being develops he or she moves away from the struggle for detachment from bias and scotosis, toward an “ever more intelligent, more wise, more self-reliant unfolding” of the pure desire to know the universe of being. The displacement of the tension between limitation and transcendence is “the root of the dialeical phenomenon of scotosis in the individual, of the bias of common sense, of basic philosophical differences, and of their prolongation in natural and human science, in morals and religion, in educational theory and history.”

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VIII. Metaphysics as Heuristic and Dialectical

Lonergan’s metaphysics is grounded in the dynamic notion of being. Among its basic metaphysical commitments are the intrinsic, dynamic finality of proportionate being. His metaphysical account of human beings entails a complex, integrated, tripartite developmental process. The central and repeated emphasis on dynamism present in Lonergan’s metaphysics, and its possible and likely distortions, requires a different kind of metaphysical method. The traditional methods rooted in logic, conceptualism and the privileging of presence (the already out there now) cannot do justice to such dynamic realities. Rather, the method of metaphysics has to be heuristic and dialectical – although Lonergan’s understanding of dialectical differs from his predecessors.

Lonergan’s method of metaphysics is heuristic. Metaphysics is wide open and dynamic because it is rooted in wonder. Equating the notion of wonder with the pure desire to know, Lonergan notes that, “Prior to the neatly formulated questions of systematizing intelligence, there is the deep-set wonder in which all questions have their source and ground.”416 It is this wonder about the universe of being that distinguishes human knowers from animals, for animals are limited to the habitual routines of merely sensitive living. According to Lonergan, “What breaks that circuit [of merely sensitive living] and releases intellectual activity is the wonder Aristotle described as the beginning of all science and all philosophy.”417 Wonder is dynamic because being itself is dynamic. Being, however, is not made manifest to us in any immediate way. Rather, our implicit desire to know and understand the universe of being is the particularly human horizon

416 Ibid., 185.  
417 Ibid., 356.
that makes it possible for wonder to emerge and draw us toward the dynamic universe of being.

For Lonergan, there is an isomorphism between knowing and being, between the operations of the human intellect and the nature of the universe itself. Fundamentally, Lonergan understands the human intellect as dynamic, and as engaged with a dynamic universe that is not rigid or fixed, but always in motion. Through the process of experiencing, understanding and judging that constitutes knowing for Lonergan, we seek out being. As Joseph Flanagan notes in his commentary on Lonergan’s philosophy, “It is being that explains why all knowers are engaged in knowing … Being is the objective of knowing, and knowing proceeds as it does in order to judge being. Knowing, then, is not outside being; rather the structure of knowing corresponds to, and is intrinsic to, the structure of being.”

Like classical scientific method, metaphysics, too, is heuristically structured, but its structure is not limited to classical insights about correlations. This heuristic structure is what allows us to pursue the process of inquiring about something that we know nothing about. Lonergan elaborates on this idea, explaining that “A heuristic notion … is the notion of an unknown content,” for example, being. Lonergan describes the structure as follows: “Name the unknown. Work out its properties. Use the properties to direct, order, guide the inquiry.” While the notion is unknown, we can anticipate the method or the “type of act through which the unknown would become known.”

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419 *Insight*, 44.
420 Ibid., 392.
whether scientific or metaphysical, is concerned with the operations of the human mind which generate ideas and relate ideas together.

Unlike classical science, which aims at the understanding of correlation, the aim of metaphysics is an ordered set of heuristic notions that anticipates the whole of proportionate being - everything that could possibly be experienced, understood, and affirmed by human reason. According to Lonergan, the practice of explicit metaphysics requires the implementation of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being. While “A heuristic structure is an ordered set of heuristic notions … an integral heuristic structure is the ordered set of all heuristic notions,” or all that could possibly be known by human reason.421

Lonergan’s method of metaphysics is also dialectical. Yet he takes pains to distinguish his method from that of Hegel, perhaps Western philosophy’s best-known dialectician. Hegelian dialectic, according to Lonergan, is “conceptualist, closed, necessitarian, and immanent” while in contrast, Lonergan’s own position is “intellectualist, open, factual and normative. It deals not with determinate conceptual contents but with heuristically defined anticipations.”422 Lonergan must be careful to distinguish himself from Hegel, for he admits that his work holds strong parallels with Hegel’s own. However Lonergan argues that Hegel’s deepest error was his failure to recognize the role of judgment in reaching an understanding of the virtually unconditioned. Lonergan notes that while Hegel “effectively acknowledged a pure desire

421 Ibid.
422 Ibid., 421.
with an unrestricted objective,” nevertheless he was following Kant, and neither thinker recognized the constitutive component of judgment that allows the knower to affirm (or deny) the virtually unconditioned.

As a result, Hegel is unable to affirm a concrete, factual, actually existing universe of the virtually unconditioned. Instead he is limited to a “universe of all-inclusive concreteness that is devoid” of the virtually unconditioned. It is this universe that Hegel names the “Absolute Idea.” This notion of the Absolute Idea shapes Hegel’s understanding of dialectic as an immanent process that moves “from position through opposition to sublation that yields a new position to recommence the triadic process until the Absolute Idea is reached.”

Stripped of its intention toward a universe of existents, the pure desire is reduced by Hegel to something which “underpins and penetrates all conceptual contents” as opposed to, for Lonergan, that dynamic orientation which draws us out of ourselves toward the universe of being. In the Hegelian system, the pure desire “becomes indistinguishable from the notion of nothing.” Lonergan claims of Hegel that “His viewpoint is essentially the viewpoint of a thinker who does not and cannot regard the factual as unconditioned, who cannot acknowledge any factually fixed points of reference, who cannot advance by distinguishing the definitively certain, the more or less probable, and the unknown. Hegel’s range of vision is enormous; indeed it is unrestricted

423 Ibid., 372.
424 Ibid., 373.
425 Ibid.
426 Ibid.
427 Ibid.
in extent. But it is always restricted in content, for it views everything as if there were no facts.\textsuperscript{428}

Ultimately, Hegel’s system (which on the surface seems impenetrable insofar as it explains away any contradictions/contradictory claims as arising from some incomplete viewpoint already included within the system) turns out to be a merely restricted viewpoint. According to Lonergan, this Hegelian approach cripples human rational consciousness by failing to properly account for the role of judgment in affirming the virtually unconditioned. Lonergan also complains that Hegelian dialectic is purely positive, with its view of a system that is ever progressing toward the Absolute Idea. Lonergan, however, is post-Hegelian, and indeed post-modernist in his respect for the social surd, which he later calls the problem of evil, a problem that cannot be swept away in the abstract progress of history.

For Lonergan, the dialectical method of metaphysics is a factor in multiple ways within the individual and the community. First, we can distinguish between dialectical processes and dialectical method. For Lonergan, dialectical method is important in order to come to terms with the special and complex problems that characterize dialectical processes. In his discussion of generalized empirical method, which draws its data from consciousness itself, Lonergan notes that “Generalized method has to be able to deal … not only with the data within a single consciousness but also with the relations between different conscious subjects, between conscious subjects and their milieu or environment,

\textsuperscript{428} \textit{Ibid.}
and between consciousness and its neural basis.  Dialectic, then, is the foundation or operator of generalized empirical method, the method Lonergan employs to come to understand the events that occur within consciousness.

Dialectical method involves the “unfolding of positions inviting development and counter-positions inviting reversal.” Positions and counter-positions are held by the individual at many levels, from the common-sensical to the philosophical. All persons hold some general position (or counter-position) about knowing, reality, objectivity, or the good – we could call this the philosophical dialectic. In addition, each person holds a position or counter-position about their own existence, for example our self-image, self-concept, self-understanding – we could call this the dialectic of the dramatic persona.

The process of dialectic is a manifestation of tension within the individual. This tension arises when irrationality is introduced into the cognitional process. Dialectic can be described as rational progression in tension with irrational regression and decline. Generally speaking, dialectic “is a concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles of change. Thus there will be a dialectic, if

1. there is an aggregate of events of a determinate character
2. the events may be traced to either or both of two principles
3. the principles are opposed yet bound together, and
4. they are modified by the changes that successively result from them.”

Lonergan specifically discusses the dialectic of the dramatic subject, which he says is “concerned with the entry of neural demands into consciousness.” The tension which sparks this dialectic of the dramatic subject (or persona) is dramatic bias. While this

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429 Ibid., 243-244.
430 Ibid., 402.
431 Ibid., 217.
432 Ibid., 218.
discussion might sound technical and abstract, Lonergan’s concrete point is that this dialectic, this dramatic tension within the subject, shapes who we are as individuals.

This individual dialectic follows the fourfold steps described above, with a few specifications. First, the aggregate of events that leads to the dialectic of the dramatic subject consists of contents and affects that emerge into consciousness. These contents and affects originate from the neural demand functions, as well as the exercise of censorship, in either a constructive or repressive fashion. These two principles, the neural demand functions and the censor, “are linked as patterned and patterning; they are opposed inasmuch as a misguided censorship results in neglected neural demands forcing their way into consciousness.” The changes that occur within the dramatic persona based on this dialectical tension are cumulative and concrete. Overall, we can surmise from Lonergan’s account that the basic tension for the individual is between openly asking and answering questions for reflection, as opposed to vigorously avoiding these questions.

The philosophical dialectic and the dialectic of the dramatic persona intersect, and this intersection affects the individual and his or her community. Within the group, we find spontaneous subjectivity in tension with intelligent social order, within a community of knowing subjects. According to Lonergan, the dialectic of community “regards the history of human relationships” and “is concerned with the interplay of more or less conscious intelligence and more or less conscious spontaneity in an aggregate of

\[433 \text{Ibid., 217.}\]
individuals. This dialectic is mainly concerned with an aggregate of social events, arising from the principles of human intersubjectivity and practical common sense. These principles are linked because “the spontaneous, intersubjective individual strives to understand and wants to behave intelligently; and inversely, intelligence would have nothing to put in order were there not the desires and fears, labors and satisfactions of individuals.” The opposition of these linked principles is responsible for the tension of community. Common sense develops as we learn from the mistakes and successes of those who come before us; intelligence develops and we adapt our living to meet its demands. Yet our adaptations (both on the individual and communal level) are not always successful, and so we attempt to maintain a balance between social tranquility and social crisis.

The reality of dialectic for Lonergan means that humans develop, or fail to do so, both individually and as a community; ideas and understandings change, positions push us forward, counter-positions move us back. Lonergan notes:

one might say that a single dialectic of community is related to a manifold of individual sets of neural demand functions through a manifold of individual dialectics. In this relationship, the dialectic of community holds the dominant position, for it gives rise to the situations that stimulate neural demands and it moulds the orientation of intelligence that preconsciously exercises the censorship.

Dialectic is a manifestation of interfered with and distorted development. Dialectical process can be described as rational progression in tension with irrational regression and

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434 Ibid., 218.
435 Ibid., 217-218.
436 Ibid., 218. My emphasis.
Dialectic then “is a concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles of change.”\textsuperscript{437}

Lonergan’s attention to the social surd, the unintelligible bias that is immanent within and concretely constitutive of the facts of a given social situation, manifests a concern with what he names the “distorted dialectic of community”\textsuperscript{438} which is a manifestation of the decline or reversal of emergent probability within human living. Feminists would certainly contend that the oppression and victimization of women through centuries of patriarchy is a vivid example of the social surd. Speaking of Lonergan’s analysis of social bias and decline, William Loewe notes

Lonergan identifies one dynamic that he finds especially pernicious. Egoism and the self-interest of groups can pervert praxis, giving rise to a situation that embodies not intelligence and responsibility but their opposite. Such a distorted situation in turn calls for pseudo-theory, theory that draws its plausibility from the facts of the situation to which it corresponds and that, rather than criticizing that situation, accepts its distortions as a given, as simply the way things are. Theory of this sort renders distortion normative.\textsuperscript{439}

It is this question about normativity that motivates the debate over the relationship between sex and gender. Feminists contest the long-held view that traditional gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are normative expressions of sexual biology. While Lonergan does not comment directly on this question, in the following chapter we will attempt to bring his position into dialogue with feminist critics, creating a dialectical encounter of sorts, to attempt to shed light on this question.

\textsuperscript{437} Ibid., 217.
\textsuperscript{438} Lonergan, Insight, 226.
\textsuperscript{439} William P Loewe. Foreword to Lonergan and Feminism, x.
Chapter Five:

An Exercise in Dialectic

I. Introduction

This project elaborates a metaphysics of the relationship between sex and gender. To that end, Chapter Two aims to briefly sketch out the approaches undertaken by four feminist theorists in their attempts to address this topic. My own work follows a path distinct from these theorists, in its attempt to elucidate a metaphysical position that works in concert with these feminist analyses, rather than clashing with their philosophical approaches which consider seriously the relation between sex and gender. This chapter will demonstrate an exercise in dialectic, bringing into dialogue the work of Irigaray, Grosz, Gatens, and Butler with my own attempt to give voice to a coherent metaphysics of sex and gender.

Irigaray, et. al. would certainly agree that the category of gender has become of utmost significance to feminist analysis, even while they use different means to problematize the relation between sex, gender, and metaphysics. A great deal of feminist work is focused on the worthwhile project of creating social and political conditions which are ripe to embrace a discourse of equality; among other important concerns, feminists seek for all women equal opportunity for education, equal pay for equal work, and equal treatment under the law. The point of returning feminism to a metaphysical discourse, though, is to deepen our approaches to these concerns. Tina Chanter, for example, asks “is ‘equality’ among men and women a worthwhile goal or does it restrict
feminism within a liberalism born out of patriarchal system?440 A metaphysics of sex and gender points us beyond the discourse of equality, to examine fundamentally the philosophical underpinnings that foster the system of inequality.

II. A. Luce Irigaray and Desire

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, Irigaray considers sexual difference to be ontologically fundamental. She posits a critique of the Western concept of desire, claiming that it arises out of masculine morphology, and is the ground of Western philosophy and metaphysics. She associates this Western thinking with a desire for completeness, and/or closure, which leads to the problem of solipsism. She argues that this desire is related to the Western metaphysical understanding of the relationship between God and being, insofar as the aim of masculine philosophy is to reach a ‘God’s eye view’, replicated in the “immediacy of the noesis.”441

In opposition to this masculine desire, Irigaray posits a notion of feminine desire. She claims that woman’s desire is fluid, constantly in motion, and stems from the morphology of the female body. This desire is related to what she calls the ‘feminine imaginary’; she describes fluid, amorphous symbols that evoke the feminine imaginary which, she argues, has been eliminated from Western metaphysical language.

Irigaray’s philosophical approach is inspired by Heidegger’s project in Being and Time. For Heidegger, the question of Being was the question of the age. Heidegger is concerned with the way in which the Western philosophical tradition, from Aristotle on,

440 Chanter, 7.
441 Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, 320.
covers over the question of the meaning of Being. In a similar fashion, Irigaray suggests that the question of sexual difference has supplanted the question of Being as the central philosophical concern of the contemporary age. Historically, the rise of organized feminism and the development of feminist theory brings a concreteness to the question of sexual difference. Centuries of male philosophers did not raise the question of sexual difference because their maleness was not an issue for them. The situation of women leads to our questioning of sexual difference – our sex, our femaleness, our non-maleness, is an issue for us. Generally speaking, feminist concerns are motivated by the concrete, historical, social situation.

From a Lonerganian point of view it is plausible that rather than the question of sexual difference, the question of ‘pure question’ is the question of our age. As elaborated in Chapter One, Lonergan’s notion of pure question is always manifest in a particular person under particular social, historical, and material conditions. According to Lonergan, pure question is the experience of a deep and abiding openness and receptivity, shared by all humans, which is the manifestation of unrestricted desire. While pure question is associated by Lonergan with a pure desire to know, the sort of desire that arises out of an orientation towards pure question is not simply focused on knowing. Rather, pure question is manifest as an originary willingness and desire to become whole, to live in a way that is integrated rather than fragmented by bias and ignorance. An attentiveness to sexual difference would certainly be an important part of living in such an integrated manner.
Irigaray, however, is very critical of the notion of desire as manifest within the Western philosophical tradition. She claims that the notion of desire is biased from a masculine point of view. According to Irigaray, the male experience of desire is tellic. That is to say, the male desire seeks a telos, it seeks completeness, fulfillment - an ordered universe in which everything is categorized and put into its place. Hence this experience of desire is the ground of masculine philosophy. She proposes a new economy of desire based on generosity, which would destroy the notion of desire as tellic.

A Lonerganian response would be that Irigaray’s account describes the phenomena of bias imposed on experience. According to Lonergan, the pure desire to know is resisted because giving oneself over to the demands of intelligence can be very uncomfortable. Resisting the comfortable status quo created by one’s own biases is the challenge of genuineness. It is important here to emphasize that this notion of genuineness arises out of Lonergan’s metaphysics. As such, it does not suggest some kind of static approach to ‘being who one is.’ Rather, to be genuine means to be open and responsive to the demands of pure desire. According to Lonergan, you could say that genuine, originary desire (male as well as female) seeks completeness, but not as Irigaray describes. Rather, as an ongoing incompleteness in an emergently probable universe in which things are unstable, the unrestricted desire to know has the character of fluidity. More specifically, the unrestricted desire to know is isomorphic with the constantly emerging incompleteness of the universe. The universe emerges in a probable way, not in a manner which is certain or determined, and so the universe itself has the character of
fluid and dynamic emergence. Pure desire respects this dynamism and is in opposition to
the kind of tellic desire that Irigaray so rightly condemns.

II. B. Metaphysics and Solipsism

Irigaray holds that the Western metaphysical tradition is plagued by solipsism, and solipsism is reflective of the 'logocentric' order of Western metaphysics. Following Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence (that is, a metaphysical system which posits presence as the central form of Being) Irigaray associates the privileging of presence or consciousness with the masculine character of Western philosophy.

Lonergan shares Irigaray’s concern with the privileging of presence in the Western tradition. Lonergan’s metaphysics is not a metaphysics of presence. His critique of the “already out there now real” is in fact a critique of the metaphysics of presence. His is not a metaphysics of presence, but a metaphysics of what is. In Lonergan’s approach to metaphysics, the subject becomes known as an antecedent to being. He examines a method for metaphysics that does not begin with the subject, but distinguishes certain kinds of knowns from other kinds of knowns. He does not assume a prior understanding of the subject. Rather, like all of the other elements of the universe, the subject must become known through experiencing, understanding and judging. Lonergan’s metaphysics is not a metaphysics of presence and non-difference, but a metaphysics of dynamism and relatedness. He does not understand consciousness as an

443 Lonergan, Insight, 251.
imperious form of silence, but as experience to be interpreted. This can be understood as the consciousness of an already languaged subject.

II. C. Irigaray’s Discussion of “Place”

Irigaray argues that women have been relegated within the ontological category of space by the Western philosophical tradition. Lonergan would agree with Irigaray that through the history of Western philosophy and science, space has been understood as a container, for example, in Newton’s idea of absolute space. In order for Newton to undertake his physics he needs to posit an absolute container to serve as the ground for his system and his equations. Removing the notion of space as an absolute container undermines classical physics. In contemporary discourse, Einstein substitutes the intelligibility of relatedness for the notion of an absolute container. Space (and time) becomes dynamic relatedness. We find a similar approach in philosophy, for example when Heidegger understands time as a manner of relating he undermines the Western notion of time as linear. Following Einstein, for Lonergan, space and time are intrinsically related. In particular, space-time is a construction of our concrete experiences and is the lowest of the manifolds.

Irigaray critiques the masculine bias of philosophical theories of place, arguing that the notion of place has been construed wrongly by the philosophical tradition, starting with Aristotle. As Tina Chanter notes

Irigaray reads Aristotle’s essay on place as one of the inaugural texts of the Western tradition to obscure the place of woman … With regard to Aristotle, she sees in his text the obliteration of sexual difference. Aristotle asks about the nature of place, about the ways in which bodies are contained in their places,
about what can be said of places that contain growing things – but he neglects to ask about those bodies that serve as receptacles for human bodies (see ES; 36-40; E: 43-46). He forgets to ask, in this context, about the containers that women in their role as mothers have provided, about their limits as containers, or about their boundaries as mothers.

A Lonerganian response suggests that the masculine technique of restricting woman to the realm of place is a result of allowing bias to interfere with the further pertinent questions that arise in any attempt to join our concrete experiences together. This bias reveals the difference between a merely animal habitat and a fully human world, for in a human world we must consider human meanings and values as a significant part of how we integrate our experiences. The pressing question becomes, ‘how do we relate all of our other experiences to our immediate concrete experience’? When we allow distorted psychic integrations to interfere we particularize women’s bodies (in fact, all human bodies) in ways that are inaccurate and unintelligible.

One way in which we relate our other experiences to our immediate concrete experience is through space and time. Lonergan’s account of space and time is helpful in articulating a response to the concerns about ‘place’ raised by Irigaray. Rather than thinking of space as a container, Lonergan understands our experiences of both space and time as relational. He claims that we can define space as the “ordered totality of concrete extensions” and time as the “ordered totality of concrete durations.”

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444 Chanter, 151.
no individual human beings, nor even the totality of the human race, has experienced the
totality of concrete extensions or durations. Rather, we experience fragments of space
and time which correlate to our concrete experience.\textsuperscript{446}

Within concrete space there is some extension that is correlative to our experience, and within concrete time there is some duration that is correlative to our experience.\textsuperscript{447} What he means is that we do not experience all of concrete space or time, but only fragments of it, and so our particular concrete experiences of space and time relate to the totalities of space and time through frames of reference, which he describes as personal, public, and special. The personal correlates our own individual experience to extension and duration, the public correlates our experiences to a public, common frame of reference, such as maps, clocks, and calendars, while special reference frames are employed in mathematics and physics to order imaginary space and time or concrete space and time, respectively.\textsuperscript{448}

Insofar as space and time relate to our concrete experiences, Lonergan speaks of space-for-us and time-for-us. He argues that space and time contain both an empirical/material element which consists of concrete extensions and durations, as well as an intelligible/formal element which orders these materials into singular totalities. Insofar as intelligence orders the material elements of space and time, “the notion of Space cannot be both concrete and all-embracing, and similarly the notion of Time cannot regard the totality of concrete durations.”\textsuperscript{449} In other words, space and time are

\textsuperscript{446} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{447} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{448} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 144-145.
\textsuperscript{449} Ibid., 149.
concrete and relational, and are not abstract containers. In fact, Lonergan notes that “Space and time, if real, are determinations within being; and if they are determinations within being, then they are not the containers, but the contained.”

Lonergan’s philosophy attends to our concrete experiences, including our concrete experiences of embodiment. His understanding of space-time as relational overcomes the notion of the mother’s body as a receptacle because he insists that our understanding of space and time must always intelligibly relate to our concrete experience. Our concrete experiences are mediated by meaning, meaning which shapes and patterns human experience. Our experiences which are shaped by meaning are concrete, spatio-temporal, embodied experiences. Rather than the neglect of bodily experience suggested in considering the pregnant body as a mere container or receptacle, what Lonergan is calling for is a true attentiveness to our concrete, spatio-temporal embodied existence, which includes the experience of carrying another human being within one’s body.

III. Elizabeth Grosz

Grosz’s thinking about embodiment coheres intelligibly with Lonergan’s metaphysics in certain ways. As I argued in Chapter Two, for Grosz, biology is “an open materiality, a set of (possibly infinite) tendencies and potentialities which may be developed, yet whose development will necessarily hinder or induce other developments

\[\text{Ibid., 513-514.}\]
For Grosz, biology is an open materiality. Biology is not a form whose contents are historically provided, nor a base upon which cultural constructs are founded, nor indeed a container for a mixture of culturally or individually specific ingredients.

This understanding of biology is related to Lonergan’s notion of potency. For Lonergan, potency is the fertility of concrete plurality that is open to emergences of various kinds. This is as true of the “conjugate potencies” proper to biology as it is of all other levels of conjugate potencies. Grosz’s description of biology quite accurately parallels Lonergan’s notion of emergent probability. However, Grosz does not explore whether, at the human level, there can be authentic or inauthentic emergences and integrations of materiality. For example, distortions at the psychic level can lead one to seek out physical harm, such as cutting oneself to relieve psychic pain. Lonergan, on the other hand, would argue that authentic emergences and integrations of materiality require attentiveness to the normative demands of the unrestricted desire to know. Failure to respect and attend to these demands of intelligence, as well as the neural demands of the unconscious component of human biological existence, can result in inauthentic emergences and integrations of our material existence.

Grosz is drawn to, and draws upon the insights of, thinkers such as Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, all of whose thinking about the body is marked by the treatment of corporeality as a series of surfaces, energies, flows and forces. These notions of underlying movement within corporeality are similar to Lonergan’s

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451 Grosz, Volatile Bodies, 191.
understanding of underlying manifolds which become integrated and systematized by higher levels. However these post-modern thinkers lack or reject a notion of finality, which is central to Lonergan’s metaphysics. Yet Lonergan’s notion of finality is “upwardly but indeterminately directed,” thus avoiding a key objection raised by Grosz and other post-modern thinkers against traditional, deterministic notions of teleology.

But again here we must consider the possibility of authentic and inauthentic corporeal integration, as well as intelligible and unintelligible three-fold (organic, psychic, intellectual) development. Feminists have rightly challenged and problematized the many ways in which the female body has been inauthentically integrated both at the individual level and by culture as a whole. There are many practices in human cultures, both Western and Eastern, which result in inauthentic or unintelligible corporeal integration. For example, in Japanese culture, tradition holds that women are banned from the sacred arena of the Sumo wrestling ring. As discussed in a recent article in the Taipei Times depicting the scandal that occurred when a woman tried to publicly enter the Sumo ring, “Sumo is linked to the Shinto faith, whose rituals strictly forbid any contact with blood, such as that shed by women during menstruation and childbirth. Women, considered to lack purity, were not even allowed to watch sumo until the late 19th century.” Women are considered unclean, and their presence would contaminate sacred space.

452 Lonergan, Insight, 452.
453 See the discussion in Chapter 4 of the notion of development, as well as Lonergan, Insight, 463-479.
In Western culture, the female form has been oversexualized, with the result being a disconnection from biological function toward an often radical reformation of the body. For example, the female breast fulfills the biological function of nursing infants, but has become an object of sexual fixation within Western culture. The popularity of cosmetic breast enlargement is rampant, with often harmful physical consequences such as leaking implants, back pain, muscle tension and headaches resulting from the carriage of overly large breasts on a small physical frame. From a Lonerganian and feminist perspective, I argue that these, and many other corporeal practices that serve patriarchal bias, are examples of unintelligible and inauthentic forms of integrations of underlying corporeal manifolds.

IV. Judith Butler

Judith Butler espouses a radical social constructionist position which discounts biological difference, although her position does not lead to a theory of equality of the sort that Irigaray and Gatens criticize. Her most influential claim is that the purpose of the social construction of sexual biology is to enforce and normalize heterosexual desire and practice, while prohibiting the experience and incarnation of homosexual desire as abnormal and/or deviant.

Butler posits a critique of the metaphysics of substance, which she applies to the category of sex. She claims that the dominant view of sexual biology is biased, arising from a metaphysics which understands the category of sex as a substance, or a
metaphysically “self-identical being.”*455 She conceives of the metaphysics of substance as connected to the problems of hierarchical dualism that plague Western metaphysics. She is concerned by the tendency of Western philosophy to split reality into binary categories which are then ordered according to their perceived measure of substance, for example as masculinity is understood both as opposed, as well as superior, to femininity. Her response to this problem is to posit an alternative to the traditional conception of desire. For Butler, desire is pure potency that can be structured and manifested without limit. This notion of desire is a response to her primary concern about the cultural normalization of heterosexual desire, and concomitant designation of homosexual desire as deviant.

For Butler, the unrestrictedness of human desire and potentiality is real and meaningful, and therefore must be preserved. In its unrestricted character, human potentiality cannot be fulfilled within any closed system shaped by bias. Her concerns here are significant. However, her conclusion is problematic because she insists that the unrestrictedness of human desire should therefore undermine any and all systems. Butler assumes that system must remain static without any consideration of development. This is not a surprising conclusion considering that Butler understands that notion of system through a Hegelian lens. Unlike Hegel whose notion of system leads to a static conclusion, Lonergan reminds us that system, metaphysically speaking, is always on the move. Unlike in Hegel’s notion of system which follows a necessary and determined

455 Butler, Gender Trouble, 25.
path, in Lonergan’s metaphysics, systems such as schemes of recurrence and higher integrations are moving in intrinsically indeterminate ways.

To Butler, desire primarily means sexual desire, as opposed to the unrestricted view of desire articulated by Lonergan. Her claim is that in heterosexist discourse, it is acceptable to desire only that which is classified as categorically other. Hence the inclusion of heterosexuality and exclusion of homosexuality within dominant cultural and ethical discourse.

To address her position from a Lonerganian perspective requires a serious consideration of concrete human experience, for sexual desire is among the desires that human beings experience concretely. And yet, the human experience of desire is not limited to sexual desire, or even to concrete experience.456 For Lonergan, desire is for everything and about everything. Desire is, and is for, all within us that is not yet intelligibly integrated into our living.

Butler and Lonergan both associate desire with potency, yet their understandings of potency differ greatly. Rather than understand potency as unrestricted sexual and interpersonal desire as in the view articulated by Butler, Lonergan conceives of potency as that which has an inherent finalistic yearning for it knows not what. Finality

456 Lonergan does, however, address the notion of a sexual ‘drive’ and his analysis is problematic from a feminist perspective, and quite reflective of the prevalent chauvinism at the time that he was writing *Insight*. On the one hand, for Lonergan, the sexual drive requires a long and complicated development, both on the organic and psychological levels. This development includes specialization of the neural demand functions, which occurs during the period up until puberty. On the other hand, while Lonergan argues that there exists generally a plasticity in the way that human neurophysiology can be organized, this is not so for sexual development. He claims that it consists of “a naturally determined sequence of apprehensions, affects, and movements that admit only superficial modifications from the inventive dramatist. Interdependent with this change, there is a psychological transformation in which the affective and submissive attitudes of the child within the family give place to the man self-reliantly orienting himself in the universe and determining to found a family of his own” (Lonergan, *Insight*, 197).
permeates the entire universe, from electrons to spiders to human feeling and volition. Desire is the expression of this finality.

Similarly, although they disagree on the nature of desire, both philosophers acknowledge that desire can become perverted. For Butler, any insistence that she ought to normatively experience or feel heterosexual desire is inauthentic. She contends that the insistence within some realms of contemporary Western culture that homosexual desire is abnormal and unnatural arises as a result of static, biased, and irrelevant metaphysical viewpoints. Lonergan would agree that contemporary culture (including the marginalization and victimization of persons who experience homosexual desire) is rife with static, biased and incorrect metaphysical viewpoints. Yet his critique of Western culture and philosophy differs from Butler’s. For Lonergan, a culture which fails to remain open to potency is an impoverished culture. Openness to potency, however, does not imply a moral relativism, because a culture is even further impoverished if it lacks a response to evil. Lonergan’s notion of potency does not suggest chaos or an indeterminacy that undermines intelligibility. Rather, openness to potency requires a fidelity to the normative demands of intelligence.

While Butler’s philosophical position is suggestive of a type of metaphysical relativism, I don’t believe this is ultimately her point. She rejects the normalization of heterosexuality as unacceptable, which she claims arises from the social construction of biology. Although she does not articulate a response to evil within Gender Trouble,

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457 In her more recent text, Undoing Gender, Butler espouses an ethical viewpoint that, for lack of a better term, may aptly be described as a “postmodern humanism.” There she situates the discourse of ethics within the question of making human life bearable, asking “what makes my own life bearable … [and]
she certainly would recognize and acknowledge that, for example, acts of violence
perpetrated against a person based upon their sexual orientation cannot be sanctioned by
human society.

Butler is primarily concerned with the reification of categories of identity into
substance, especially with regard to notions of gender identity. She claims that

Gender can denote a unity of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when
sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender – where gender is a
psychic and/or cultural designation of the self – and desire – where desire is
heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to
that other gender it desires.  

She argues vociferously against this reified understanding of the relation between sex and
gender, which she understands as an attempt to normalize a heterosexual orientation for
all individuals within society.

Certainly Butler would consider forcing a person to accept or inauthentically
portray a sexual orientation that is not their own to be objectionable, perhaps even
unethical. However the question of ethics raises the problem of norms for Butler, as
related to the problem of concrete experience. Butler backs herself into a philosophical
corner with her attempts to articulate an alternative to a static metaphysical system and
deterministic notions of teleology. She is correctly insistent on rejecting a static and
deterministic metaphysics, but without a notion of a dynamic metaphysics as an
alternative she is left with a position that rejects any notion of normativity and as a result
undermines the very sort of ethical position that she seems to advocate.

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from a position of power, and from the point of view of distributive justice, what makes, or ought to make,

Butler is attentive to the concrete experience of sexual desire, but otherwise largely ignores the problem of concrete human experience. This is especially so with regard to what Lonergan might describe as the concrete experience of the desire to be normative, which for Butler is a desire constructed by society. She associates this desire with a capitulation to the status quo, rather than seriously developing the possibility of the emergence of a norm that challenges and confronts the narrow-minded obscurantism of the status quo. This association of authenticity with narrow-mindedness is decidedly problematic, for what does Butler hope for in her critique of hegemonic discourses about desire but an opportunity for human beings to experience and express their desires in an authentic manner. As such, perhaps it would be more intelligible to someone who shares Butler’s view to speak of a desire for genuine integration that responds authentically to the further questions that arise in any attempt to integrate one’s own concrete experiences.

Regarding the failure of philosophy to attend to concrete experience, Lonergan points out that there is an often misunderstood difference between the metaphysical and the logical or grammatical. This confusion results in a false reification of the subject-predicate structure of propositions. As a result, logical analysis is mistakenly substituted for metaphysical analysis. The result is that philosophers move away from concreteness towards generalities. These generalities fail to take into account the demands that the concrete makes if it is to be genuinely understood. Our cultural norms reflect this failure.

A. N. Whitehead alludes to this difficulty in his notion of the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” in which the subject-predicate structure of ordinary language
misleads us. Lonergan suggests, similarly, that the abstractness of a proposition leads us away from the concreteness of being. Language is abstract when conceived in terms of discrete subjects and predicates because the terms are cut off from their grounds within the constituency of proportionate being. When one is engaged in the common-sensical act of understanding things as related to us, \(^{459}\) the subjects and predicates of language make our understanding less concrete. This problem is addressed in Lonergan’s discussion of metaphysical equivalence.

Lonergan’s notion of metaphysical equivalence regards the relationship between true propositions and metaphysical elements. Both refer to being, but in different ways. He further distinguishes between propositional and metaphysical analysis. In propositional analysis, true propositions can be (either grammatically or logically) analyzed. Propositional analysis involves a consideration of the end product of cognitional process: nouns/verbs, subjects/predicates, and terms/relations. On the other hand, metaphysical analysis focuses not on the end product, but on the dynamic structure of cognitional process. There is some correspondence between metaphysical elements and true propositions (as both refer to being) but that correspondence is not one-to-one, for these forms of analysis have very different bases.\(^{460}\)

Metaphysical analysis is also often confused with logical analysis. More specifically, logical analysis is substituted for metaphysical analysis. Consequently, metaphysical analysis is often mistakenly deemed abstract. Lonergan argues that, in fact, metaphysical analysis is concrete because “there is nothing to a thing apart from its

\(^{459}\) This understanding is restricted by culture if I understand myself within a system of patriarchy.

potencies, forms, and acts.”\textsuperscript{461} Moreover, metaphysical elements are defined heuristically, which allows them to be general but not abstract. Lonergan notes that while ‘potency’, ‘form’, and ‘act’ are general concepts and names, their reference is exclusively to concrete potencies, forms, and acts. On the other hand, true propositions may be abstract in their meaning; and then to assign their metaphysical equivalent, they have to be transposed into concrete propositions.\textsuperscript{462}

As all metaphysical elements are concrete, they are also individual. The problem of individuation arises only when beings are referred to grammatically or logically, not metaphysically. This problem really refers to the kind of individuality that consists in merely empirical difference, so that there is no intelligible distinction between beings, but rather merely material difference. The metaphysical ground of such empirical difference is potency.\textsuperscript{463}

Moreover, the metaphysical elements of potency, form, and act regard things as understood in their relations to one another. Since most propositions are formulated mainly as descriptive, in order to assign metaphysical equivalents to propositions they must be transposed into explanatory form. This transposition is necessary in order to determine the metaphysical grounds of the truth of true propositions. It is also necessary in order to remove the unnoticed cultural and gender biases that would otherwise remain incorporated in the descriptive mentality that regards ‘things as related to us’ - which includes us concretely with our biases. This process is what is designated by Lonergan as the rule of explanatory formulation.\textsuperscript{464}

\textsuperscript{461} \textit{Ibid.}, 503.
\textsuperscript{462} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{463} \textit{Ibid.}, 504.
\textsuperscript{464} \textit{Ibid.}, 504 - 505.
He argues that it is extremely dangerous philosophically to fail to observe this rule because the result of this failure to properly distinguish between the descriptive and the explanatory is the “substitution of a pseudo-metaphysical myth-making for scientific [and philosophical] inquiry.”\textsuperscript{465} In addition, this leads to the creation of “counter-positions on reality, knowledge, and objectivity.” As a result of the emergence of philosophical counter-positions

there arises a demand for a metaphysics that is grounded, not in the impalpable potentiality of explanation, but in the manifest truth of description. The correct ground of metaphysics is rejected and instead there is erected a pseudo-metaphysics whose elements stand in a happy, if ultimately incoherent, conjunction with sensitive presentations and imaginative representations. Then the real is the ‘already out there now’, knowing is taking a good look, and objectivity begins from the obviousness of extroversion to end in the despair of solipsism.\textsuperscript{466}

While they do not identify it as such, it is this sort of metaphysical counter-position that Butler and other feminist critics of the Western metaphysical tradition are reacting against, as well as unwittingly perpetuating.

In order for the goals of feminism to become fully realized, feminist philosophy must embrace a critical metaphysics. As Lonergan notes,

Only a critical metaphysics that envisages at once positions and counter-positions can hope to present successfully the complex alternatives that arise in the pursuit of the human sciences in which both the men under inquiry and the men that are inquiring may or may not be involved in the ever possible and ever varied aberrations of polymorphic consciousness.\textsuperscript{467}

It is only through the practice of a critical metaphysics that the notion of sex and, correspondingly, gender as static and determined can be countered, and the emergence of

\textsuperscript{465} Ibid., 505.
\textsuperscript{466} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{467} Ibid., 508-509.
human embodiment as multiplicity framed by contingency can be understood. Butler’s philosophy lacks the metaphysical tools to conceive of a universe that is at once ordered and contingent, and is therefore drawn into a social constructionism that understands the notion of gender as a performativity that is metaphysically arbitrary.

V. Moira Gatens

Moira Gatens rejects the capriciousness that Butler associates with the human performance of gender. Instead, Gatens argues for a contingent relation between sex and gender. Even though Gatens’ understanding of metaphysics remains ultimately counter-positional, still her argument for contingency is more consistent with a positional metaphysics than the arguments developed by Irigaray, Grosz, or Butler.

Gatens accuses Anglo-American feminists of overusing “gender” as a central organizing/explanatory category. She argues that this overuse comes about as a result of considering body and psyche as tabula rasa, with a view of the mind as a neutral and passive entity upon which we inscribe social lessons. In this view, the body serves merely as a passive mediator of these social lessons. Gatens’ own claim is that the body and psyche (consciousness) are not neutral entities that can be socialized arbitrarily. Rather, Gatens claims that the subject is always sexed, always sexually specified as either male or female.468 So, patriarchy is not only about gender, but about sexual difference and sexual specification.

468 Indeed, there are additional sexual specifications such as “hemaphrodite” or “natural eunuch.” In particular, the term ‘natural eunuch’ was applied variously, both to males who were physically ‘normal’ and chose to be celibate, as well as to males who were born physically or genetically ‘defective’. Historically, both in Western and Eastern cultures, natural eunuchs were distinguished from created
Gatens has a different approach to articulating what Lonergan would understand as the plurality of potentiality. For Gatens, plurality is not biologically determined, not caused, but rather sets the conditions for the possibility of emergence. This is the notion of “contingency” that Gatens articulates. Her argument is that the relation between sex and gender is contingent, as opposed to arbitrary, meaning that the facticity of biology conditions the possibility for the emergence of societal notions and norms of gender.

Gatens rejects a behaviorist conception of the subject, focusing on bodily experiences as sites of significance rather than products of social conditioning. This notion of sites of significance is a very concrete way to conceive of embodiment, for in a Lonerganian sense, the totality of our bodily experiences (depending on what we take “bodily” to mean) invite understanding and decision.

What might we take “bodily” to mean? For Gatens, this refers not merely to the physical body, but the body as lived or situated. Following Lacan, Gatens names this phenomenon the ‘imaginary body.’ For Gatens, the imaginary body is both socially and historically constructed, but not in an arbitrary manner. Gatens argues that there exists a complex, concrete network of signification that applies to the body, which is manifested historically, psychologically and culturally. This process of signification is reflected in Lonergan’s philosophy by the patterns of experience: biological, artistic, intellectual, dramatic, mystical, and practical. While patterning is not limited to the body, these elements of experience have a bodily basis and are functionally linked to bodily

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eunuchs, who were variously castrated or whose sexual organs were injured in some way as to prevent procreation. See Kathryn M. Ringrose. “Eunuchs in Historical Perspective” History Compass, (2007), (5)2, 495–506. In addition, contemporary scholarship and activism in the area of transsexualism promises to further enlarge our conceptions of sexual specificity.
movements and experiences. This patterning occurs at both the individual and social level.

The cultural, ethical, and political significances that emerge surrounding sex and gender differences are more important to Gatens than the fact of gender socialization *per se*. Her point is that rather than simply acknowledging sex differences as biological, culture assigns the facts of these differences more complex meaning. Thus, sex and gender differences are never left to stand on their own, but become incorrectly, dangerously characterized and appropriated within hierarchical relations of superiority and inferiority. For Lonergan, these characterizations have no metaphysical basis whatsoever, but are the result of bias that ensues from our inability or refusal to ask and answer all of the relevant questions about the meanings of sex and gender differences.

Reflecting her concern with problems of metaphysical dualism and hierarchy, Gatens’ later writings engage with the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (and his collaborator Felix Guattari), and espouse a version of metaphysical monism. She reads Deleuze through the influence of Spinoza, whose philosophy deeply influences Deleuze’s thinking. Gatens is interested in critiquing the dualism between nature and culture, which she identifies with a juridical viewpoint developed by humanist philosophers (such as Hobbes) which “posits a dual ontology consisting of two distinct planes: first, a plane of immanence (nature itself); second, a transcendent plane which functions to organize and socialize the first.”


complementary of Spinoza’s monistic ontology, arguing that when Spinoza discusses ‘god or nature’ [Deus sive Natura] the ‘or’/‘sive’ is meant to be inclusive rather than disjunctive, so that god and nature are not thought in opposition to each other. This notion of inclusivity becomes increasingly clear as Gatens argues that the idea of god in Spinoza’s Ethics is not traditionally mono-theistic, but rather “refers to the creative and entirely immanent power of active nature.”⁴⁷¹

It is through this focus on immanence that Gatens aims to remedy mind/body dualism and the discursive, normative stratifications of embodiment and subjectivity (sex, gender, race, class) engendered by such dualism.⁴⁷² The metaphysical and ontological position articulated by Gatens differs from Lonergan’s philosophy insofar as she “rejects any notion of essence or finality.”⁴⁷³ Gatens’ philosophy also lacks a Lonerganian notion of finality as dynamic emergence. Rather, she rejects a juridical humanism that associates finality with a transcendent power to organize and regulate (static and fixed) human nature and behavior.⁴⁷⁴

Similar to Lonergan, however, Gatens reveals that bodies possess a kind of potency that cannot be merely arbitrarily integrated. Her difficulty in developing this insight is likely a result of her commitment to a monism which seems incompatible with the notion of a higher integration which emerges out of a lower potency. The result is that her metaphysical position (her monism) is at odds with her concrete claims about the

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.
⁴⁷² Ibid., 65.
⁴⁷³ Ibid. Once again, she is influenced in her conclusion by her readings of Spinoza and Deleuze.
⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 60.
body, sex, and gender. As a result, her position is ultimately at odds with Lonergan’s notions of emergence, as well as his understanding of finality.

VI. Lonergan’s Anti-Essentialism

While Lonergan and Gatens differ in their notions of finality, they both reject metaphysical essentialism. In his critique of essentialism, Lonergan discusses the ideal of pure reason, noting that this ideal “resulted from the transference of mathematics to philosophy of the ideal of a set of fundamental, analytic, self-evident, necessary, universal propositions from which, by deduction, we reach equally necessary and universal conclusions.” Lonergan critiques this ideal, claiming that it is “a deductivist ideal proceeding from analytic propositions to universal and necessary conclusions … In fact, the ideal of pure reason is the Euclidean ideal. It is what in contemporary scholastic circles is called essentialism.”

While both Lonergan and Kant put forward a critique of the ideal of pure reason and its resulting essentialism, Lonergan disagrees with Kant’s strategy of eliminating essentialism by abolishing any knowledge of noumenal reality.

Rather surprisingly, Lonergan’s rejection of essentialism arises from his Thomist roots. He comments that Aquinas’ notion of actus perfecti (act of a complete being) “is a brilliant and penetrating negation of essentialism.” In order to understand the reason for this comment, it helps to understand Lonergan’s notion of ‘essence.’ For Lonergan, essences are elements in reality that correspond to what one comes to know through the

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activity of defining. These elements, however, do not capture the whole of reality. In fact, Lonergan names three elements of reality. He calls the elements of reality that are less than essences ‘essences on the way’ which he describes further as “movements, acts that actualize incompletely, acts intrinsically in anticipation of completion and so intrinsically in time.” In addition, Lonergan describes the relation between essences and ‘more-than-essences,’ which he calls ‘acts.’ To illustrate this relation Lonergan uses the example of sight and seeing. While sight is an essence (an element in reality that can be defined), seeing is act. Seeing cannot be considered to be a different essence, for seeing and sight share the same definition. So then how do sight and seeing differ? According to Lonergan, sight is potency while seeing is act. Sight is potentially, while seeing is actually. Lonergan describes act as “that [which] does not need or anticipate something further to become what it is to be … [which] intrinsically stands outside time.”

Lonergan points to the influence of essentialism (as a form of rationalism) within the history of philosophy, which restricted philosophy to the study of the per se (for example the per se of human nature) to the exclusion of the study of concrete existence. It cannot be overstressed that for Lonergan, metaphysics is in opposition to essentialism. He views the role of metaphysicians as disablers, rather than practitioners, of essentialism, noting that “Insofar as metaphysicians say, ‘Well, your study of being is not

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\[477\] Ibid.
\[478\] Ibid.
a study of essences, it is the study of concrete existence,’ you’ve pulled one of the pegs from underneath that other [essentialist] conception of philosophy.”

So how does Lonergan’s notion of act help to clarify the question of the relation of sex and gender? Lonergan’s unmistakably clear rejection of essentialism supports the repudiation of the idea that human natures are fixed and determined by biological sex. To understand the relationship between biology and subjectivity we return to the notion of ‘system on the move’ which expresses the becoming of the gendered individual as well as the universe as a whole, a dynamic and open universe in which “what is to be known becomes determinate only through knowing, so what is to be becomes determinate only through its own becoming.”

As the investigation of concrete existence requires empirical investigation, we will return briefly to Lonergan’s discussion of empirical method in order to elucidate the heuristic structures that govern the development of sex and gender. The heuristic structure of the development of sex and gender relates to the distinction between classical and statistical science. Specifically, the question arises of whether the study of the nature of the sex/gender divide is a study of classical laws, for example the nature of biological sex, or statistical processes and probabilities, such as the development of gender through psycho-social realities? This question is complicated by the consideration of the role of the patterning of concrete human experience, and the finalistic orientation of human development, as well as by manifestations of human frailty and bias.

479 Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, 382.
VII. Classical and Statistical Heuristic Structures

Lonergan claims that there are two types of heuristic structures, the classical and the statistical. In and of themselves, heuristic structures are empty, they “anticipate a form that is to be filled.”\textsuperscript{481} As questioners and knowers, we can anticipate the general process of filling the form. In the case of classical heuristic structure, this involves “intelligent anticipation of the systematic-and-abstract on which the concrete converges.”\textsuperscript{482} Here, Lonergan suggests that classical science is interested in the intelligible structure of systematic process. For example, the classical inquirer might examine the systematic process by which a tornado is formed. The same basic process is at work whenever a tornado occurs. In order to understand the formation of the tornado, the classical scientist must study the systematic process. The classical scientist is neither interested in the frequency of the occurrence of tornadoes, nor the empirically residual aspects of tornadoes. She seeks only insights into the intelligible structure of the tornado itself. Such insights, if confirmed, yield knowledge of classical laws.

Lonergan defines a systematic process as follows:

1. The whole of a systematic process and its every event possess but a single intelligibility that corresponds to a single insight or single set of unified insights,
2. Any situation can be deduced from any other without an explicit consideration of intervening situations, and
3. The empirical investigation of such process is marked not only by a notable facility in ascertaining and checking abundant and significant data but also by a supreme moment when all data fall into a single perspective, sweeping deductions become possible, and subsequent exact predictions regularly are filled.\textsuperscript{483}

\textsuperscript{481} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 103.
\textsuperscript{482} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{483} \textit{Ibid.}, 48.
Systematic processes occur in and around us every day. They are ordinary events. Some examples of systematic processes are photosynthesis, the cycle of precipitation, and digestion. These processes are systematic, for they are “little more than a perpetual repetition of the essentially the same story.”\(^{484}\)

Conversely, statistical heuristic structure is an “intelligent anticipation of the systematic-and-abstract setting a boundary or norm from which the concrete cannot systematically diverge.”\(^{485}\) Statistical science seeks insight into frequency and probability, and if confirmed, such insight yields knowledge of non-systematic probabilities. Non-systematic processes lack “the intelligibility that characterizes systematic process.”\(^{486}\) They are not characterized by any “single insight, [nor] single set of unified insights, that masters at once the whole process and all its events.”\(^{487}\) In addition, “there can be no single combination of selected laws that holds for the whole process. On the contrary, for every different insight or different set of unified insights there will be a different combination and perhaps even a different selection of laws … The different selections and combinations will not satisfy any orderly series or progression or grouping whatever.”\(^{488}\) Lastly, non-systematic processes exhibit coincidental aggregates. An aggregate is defined as coincidental if: “(1) The members of the aggregate have some unity based on spatial juxtaposition or temporal succession or both, and (2) there is no corresponding unity on the level of insight and intelligible

\(^{484}\) Ibid., 52.
\(^{485}\) Ibid., 103.
\(^{486}\) Ibid., 56.
\(^{487}\) Ibid., 48.
\(^{488}\) Ibid., 49.
Non-systematic process as a whole shares these characteristics. Like systematic processes, non-systematic processes are ordinary events that happen every day. The following are examples of non-systematic process: A set of winners of three horse races, for example, The Triple Crown; precipitation or lack thereof in Boston on seven consecutive days, the number of lilac buds in my garden that will flower on May first, and automobile accidents that occur on the highway. The Triple Crown, for example, is a non-systematic process because the members of the aggregate (the three races) are unified not by a single intelligibility based upon a single insight, but by temporal succession. Also, there exists no corresponding unity on the level of any intelligible relation. In other words, the races are related by their situatedness in time rather than a single unified perspective. The outcomes of the races can vary based upon the concrete particularities of the situation, whereas conversely, in a systematic process “exact predictions regularly are filled.” The outcomes of a horserace are not so easily deduced, because they are dependent upon many contingent variables, such as the conditions of the track on race day, the health of the horses, or the skills and preparedness of the jockeys.

VIII. A. Cynthia Crysdale: The Metaphysical and Ethical Significance of Classical and Statistical Law

Perhaps the most important point that Lonergan makes in his discussion of classical and statistical knowledge is that these two different types of investigation of the

489 Ibid., 49-50.
490 Ibid., 48.
universe are not competing with one another, but rather are complementary types of knowledge.⁴⁹¹ Highlighting this fact, Cynthia Crysdale explores the relationship between classical and statistical “law” in her article, “Revisioning Natural Law: From the Classicist Paradigm to Emergent Probability.”⁴⁹² She notes that classical inquiry focuses on one-to-one causality, for example the chemical processes that occur after fertilization of an egg, whereas statistical inquiry aims to “explain the ideal frequencies that indicate when an event (such as fertilization) is likely to occur.”⁴⁹³ Crysdale focuses on the significance for moral theory of the distinction between classical and statistical inquiry. However, she must elaborate Lonergan’s metaphysics as a prelude to her ethical analysis, and as such her analysis complements my own. In addition, Crysdale’s article highlights ways in which my own metaphysical project leads to concomitant ethical questions and concerns.

Crysdale argues that the classicist world view presumes that all of the created order is governed by classical laws. If this were the case, “natural moral law would involve determining how not to disrupt the given one-to-one causality.”⁴⁹⁴ Lonergan’s view is not classicist, and so he takes seriously the notion that probability is an important factor in world process. Hence, non-systematic disruption of one-to-one causality by many-to-many causality is totally natural.

Crysdale’s examination of a Lonerganian approach to natural law is significant for our discussion of sex and gender, in light of the fact that many arguments about sex

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 104.
⁴⁹³ Ibid., 454.
⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 455.
and gender norms, particularly arguments that appeal to biological and historical essentialism, arise out of natural law theory. Such positions are widely criticized by feminists and gender scholars, Crysdale included. Crysdale’s argument, primarily focused on questions of moral norms, also has relevance for metaphysical questions about sex and gender. She claims that under the rubric of the relationship between classical and statistical inquiry, moral questions change from focusing on the disruption of natural causality to changing the probabilities. For example, Crysdale asks: “How and under what conditions is it legitimate to affect the probabilities of various ‘natural’ events (such as conception)?”

We could enlarge this point to examine the question of the development of a gendered persona of a human person with a sexed body.

Crysdale points out that natural law theories come in two varieties. The first, natural law according to nature, is focused on cycles of biology and sensitivity which humans share with other animals. The second variety, natural law according to reason, is concerned with the orders of will and intellect which are distinctive to the human species. Crysdale argues that “the rise of modern science and historical consciousness has meant that our cultural conceptions of both nature and reason have undergone a radical shift.” By ‘historical consciousness,’ Crysdale refers to the notion that “human knowledge and meaning itself involves a dynamism that yields different truths at

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495 Ibid., 465.
496 Crysdale elaborates the varieties of natural law using the terminology of ethicist Richard Gula.
497 Crysdale notes a problem with the above terminology. She will advert to the term “created order” to refer to the ‘givens’ in the whole of world process, and “nature” “to refer to the physical, chemical, biological, zoological aspects of both the human and the non-human world” including the body and the environment. “Reason” she will take to refer to the “world as mediated by human reason, not as something restricted to cognition or logic” (Crysdale, Revisioning Natural Law, 465).
498 Ibid.
different times and places.” 499 From the worldview of historical consciousness “both nature and reason are conceived as dynamic and developing” as opposed to the static view of the world and of reason held by the classicist view. From the point of view of historical consciousness one cannot ignore the significance of modern science, for it “uncovered the processes of the created order by empirical observation rather than by logical deduction” and as a result “revealed both nature and reason to be dynamic.” 500

As a thinker who embraces the viewpoint of historical consciousness, Lonergan places significant emphasis on his theory of emergent probability. Crysdale highlights that Lonergan’s account of emergent probability “seeks to explain both the regularities of systems and the probabilities arising from non-systematic aspects of the world.” 501 Classical laws abstract from the temporal and concrete to verify an invariant principle which expresses a relationship that holds consistently across space and time; conversely, when conditions are met, statistical science accounts for that which classical science passes over – a “coincidental aggregate of events that defy intelligible explanation.” 502 Statistical inquiry focuses on the concrete, specifically the frequency with which events occur in a given concrete situation. It generally focuses on two questions – ‘how likely’ (ideal frequencies) and ‘how often’? (actual frequencies).

This type of inquiry, however, is “subject to ongoing changes in coincidental manifolds of events.” 503 As such, statistical science aims not at the “nature” of phenomena, but at “the state of” certain concrete events. So, what is the relationship

499 Ibid., 466.
500 Ibid.
501 Ibid., 467.
502 Ibid., 468.
503 Ibid., 469.
between classical and statistical inquiry? In *Insight*, Lonergan claims that there is an inverse relationship between the two: “classical formulations regard conjugates, which are verified only in events. And statistical formulations regard events, which are defined only by conjugates.” So, to summarize, both classical and statistical scientific inquiries yield insights into the intelligibility of events in the world. While both approaches seek intelligibility, they seek different types of intelligibility, and as a result classical and statistical explanations for world events differ, yet do not compete. Ultimately, if such explanations are correct, they will yield complementary results.

**VIII. B. Emergent Probability and Natural Law: Exploring the Relationship Between Metaphysics and Ethics**

Crysdale concludes that nature does not have a fixed intentionality of its own. In fact, she believes that danger exists in the tendency to mystify nature. This mystification of nature leads to the idea that we should “let nature take its course” as that course is guided or even determined by a statistical world order fixed or determined by an omnipotent deity. The fact of the matter, she claims, is that world order is conditioned by probability, not fixed and static. In addition, humans – as autonomous and rational beings – affect these probabilities. As intelligent beings, we can envision possibilities and use them to bring about our purposes. Consequently, metaphysical realities lead to ethical concerns.

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Crysdale points to debates over human intervention in the natural world – for example the question of whether we should control fires in Yellowstone National Park or let them burn as they will – to argue that nature does not have a will of its own that stands over and against human action. She complains that the belief that we as humans have a responsibility to sit back and ‘let nature take its course’ is both a false moral ideal and impossible proposition. She argues that this is impossible because there is a reciprocal relationship between natural cycles and human intervention. She claims that

The created order … is a complex system of cycles of recurrence, some of which involve human action. And just as there are schedules of probability within natural cycles, which set the conditions for other natural occurrences, so natural cycles set conditions for human choices, and human actions, or lack thereof, set conditions for the emergence of natural phenomena.  

Ultimately she argues that “recognizing and predicting probabilities of the emergence, survival, or demise of cycles of recurrence is necessarily a part of ethical analysis.”

Crysdale notes here that, from the ethical perspective, choosing not to intervene is as much of an intervention (of sorts) as direct intervention itself, insofar as both action and inaction affect the probabilities of a situation. She points out that this is especially true in regard to difficult questions of medical ethics.

Her argument about ‘natural law’ here is that we must recognize that statistical laws are constitutive of world order – that the world is not solidified in some already established pattern, but is conditioned by probabilities, and thus conditional. Our ethical task then becomes to discern how our actions and choices might affect the probabilities which emerge in the universe. She states it clearly from a theological point of view,

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506 Ibid., 477-478.
507 Ibid., 478.
“God’s will, rather than being a matter of conforming to an already established pattern in
the world, involves creating patterns as part of a web of conditioning probabilities. The
moral task involves not conforming to nature but transforming it.”\textsuperscript{508}

Crysdale is not claiming that we have unlimited license to transform nature in any
way we wish. This is not even possible, for we cannot have complete control over the
nonsystematic aspects of world process, although many human interventions attempt to
do so. She claims that “no intervention that seeks to affect probabilities will ever
ultimately shift the conditioned nature of existence.”\textsuperscript{509} The autonomy of human reason
is not absolute.

Crysdale is deeply critical here of both the classicist approach to natural law, and
the view that there are no limits to human intervention in nature. She states that

To admonish people to conform to a given created order, when their
constitution is such as to orient them toward the transforming of
themselves and their worlds, is to stifle human flourishing and overlook
the role of human value and action in history. On the other hand, to
promote unreflective intervention in the created world as if there were no
conditions limiting such intervention is to sabotage, as we now realize, the
very existence of the species itself.\textsuperscript{510}

She argues that Lonergan’s explanation of the role of conditioned schemes of recurrence
in the emergence of the universe provides a way to avoid a dualistic view of the human
person. In Crysdale’s assessment, Lonergan’s analysis of world process provides a
complex view of the human person. She notes that from Lonergan’s discussion of the
‘unity of man’ in \textit{Insight} it can be surmised that “human living involves a higher

\textsuperscript{508} \textit{Ibid.}, 479.
\textsuperscript{509} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{510} \textit{Ibid.}, 480.
integration of the lower orders of physical, chemical, organic, and sensitive processes. Far from implying a dualism of mind and body, this view asserts an intrinsic interdependency among many layers of the created order.»511

This interdependency is complex in the human being, because intelligent consciousness, which is the core of human existence, is a higher integration that is dependent upon lower schemes which are beyond our control. Human existence is embodied existence, and neither human intelligence nor morality can function properly without the complex underlying support of properly functioning “physical, chemical, organic, and psychic processes.”512 We can influence these processes to a degree, but if we effect too much change we will destroy the process altogether.

Crysdale’s conclusion about the implications for ethics of her revised view of ‘natural law’ is two-fold. First, she claims that “The underlying manifolds of nature cannot be translated into moral norms.”513 This means that ethical questions are questions of intelligence. The only genuine way to address ethical questions is through Lonergan’s transcendental precepts, through being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. This means that our understanding of natural law must be grounded in the rational structure of human consciousness as opposed to “natural” animal or biological processes, even when those processes serve to underlie human rationality. Human reason is capable of understanding the complex relationship between classical and statistical

511 Ibid.
512 Ibid., 481.
513 Ibid.
inquiry, and must apply that understanding to our grasp of the unfolding natural world order.

Second, she notes that “human intelligence and moral agency are only relatively free.” Human existence is conditioned by the physiological, the ecological, etc. Therefore we must attend to the “complex interrelations among non-intelligent schemes of recurrence.” She deduces that the fundamental premise of theories of “natural law” is that “principles of natural law, while they cannot be directly derived from knowledge of natural, non-intelligent processes, must take such knowledge into account or risk violating the very premise of natural law itself – that of attending to the created order.”\(^{514}\)

As unified combinations of animal sensitivities and intelligent consciousness, humans are defined by our intelligence and capacity for deliberation. The normative constitution of human consciousness thus grounds natural law, as opposed to mere animal sensitivities, or biological processes. Human existence and intelligence is conditioned by the created order, and thus we must be attentive to and develop understanding of the natural world in order to act in an ethical manner. Hence, Crysdale argues that a revised view of natural law “must further locate itself in an analysis of history that is critical and normative, but that grounds its critical stance in the norms constitutive of human intelligence … It will take as an important task, not defining ways in which persons should conform to nature, but clarifying the values implicit in interventions in nature, and

\[^{514}\text{Ibid., 483.}\]
stipulating which transformations are ultimately conducive to human flourishing and which are not.”515

VIII. C. Emergent Probability, World Process, and Human Living

As discussed in Chapter Four, emergent probability is the concrete manifestation and structure of finality within the universe. Lonergan concludes that emergent probability constitutes the order or design of world process, by which he means a “spatio-temporal manifold of events” which is governed by classical and statistical laws.516 Crysdale affirms Lonergan’s position, and claims that the notion of emergent probability “contradicts a determinism by which all of world process is considered intelligible according to classical laws.”517

Crysdale is particularly interested in the ways in which “emergent probability is operative in human living.”518 She reasons that human schemes emerge, stabilize and function automatically, for example in the cultivation of habits. However, as human living develops we supplant ‘natural’ (i.e. physical, chemical, biological) schemes with our own intelligence and will. Our cognitive and intellectual development leads to autonomy. As this process continues “freedom and choice become ever more constitutive” of the individual as such. Crysdale notes that “Rather than being merely ‘conditioned by’ their environment, humans are ‘conditioners of’ their environments,

515 Ibid.
516 Lonergan, Insight, 125.
517 Crysdale, Revisioning Natural Law, 473.
518 Ibid.
and, hence, of themselves.”

We could also say that while humans are part of the created order, we also constitute a *creative* order. As the feminist authors discussed previously have argued, our personal and cultural expressions of sex and gender are manifestations of the human creative order. However, as feminist theories have widely demonstrated, it is clear that such expressions are not always in service to the human good.

Crysdale argues that human communities are just as subject to emergent probability as individuals, in particular “schemes of recurrence in a community set the conditions for individual development.”

Such schemes include but are not limited to the economy, polity, discipline, patterns of affection, and human systems. These communal schemes are not entirely or purely subject to human willing, however, as they are subject to the probabilities which condition our universe.

This existence of emergent probability in human affairs thrusts us into the “arena of history” which is “neither automatic progression nor complete chaos.”

According to Crysdale, history is composed of “… a series of increasingly complex, increasingly more systematized integrations of meaning and practice which are, nevertheless, subject to probabilities of emergence and survival.”

Human action is not neutral, however, and so in considering the meaning of history in human living we are also called to consider questions of ethics. Crysdale concludes that “human living and the history that emerges from it are to be understood under the rubric of emergent probability: they are subject to

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520 *Ibid.,* 475.
both classical laws that explain recurrent schemes and the statistical laws that explain the emergence and survival of these schemes.”523 Human living, though, is not always oriented toward the good. Lonergan argues that “The challenge of history is for man progressively to restrict the realm of chance or fate or destiny and progressively to enlarge the realm of conscious grasp and deliberate choice.”524 Feminism argues that the ‘fate’ or ‘destiny’ of women ought not be oppression and brutality at the hand of patriarchal power. Emergent schemes of recurrence are not always examples of progress; evident throughout human history, even in historical realities such as the systematic oppression of women and non-dominant males through the emergence and expansion of patriarchal values, are both short and long cycles of human decline.525 The destructive effects of the abuse of patriarchal power, and its manifestations of violence and oppression, are among the longest cycles of decline in human history.

History and human science are not merely descriptive. In becoming explanatory, both elucidate norms. This fact connects with Crysdale’s original questions regarding natural law: What is the source of such norms? What comprises world order (Crysdale would say world process as expressed in emergent probability)? Are there any norms implicit within world order? In particular, our concern here regards norms relating to the expression of sex and gender within human living, and thus necessarily within human history.

523 Ibid.
524 Lonergan, Insight, 228.
525 For a discussion of cycles of decline and progress in human history, see Lonergan, Insight, chapter 7.
Conclusion

While the phenomenon of gender has become more highly diverse, especially during the twentieth century, there remains a deep and abiding commitment within Western culture to a binary and hierarchical gender norm. Gender is enacted through the dramatic pattern of experience, and as such it is vulnerable to bias. Generally, the source of bias is our failure to ask and answer all of the questions relevant to our concrete situation. In particular, our understanding of biological sex is likely very limited. There are numerous questions about the facts of biology and biological sex that have yet to be asked, let alone answered.\(^\text{526}\) As such, our actualization of gender within the dramatic sphere is a manifestation of our limited understanding of the facts and meanings of sexual biology. This leads to the emergence of humanly created schemes of recurrence that are likewise vulnerable to biases.

From a Lonerganian point of view, sexual biology is about potency. Conversely, within the history of biology, sexual biology has not been interpreted primarily in terms of potency as finality, but in terms of potency as limit. Of course there is a corresponding relationship between potency as finality and potency as limit, but if one is overly focused on limitation, the meaning and significance of potency tends to be ignored.

One goal of feminisms – as varied as they are – is to disprove the deterministic, essentialistic association between the facts of female biology and the supposed inherent limitedness (social, intellectual, personal, moral, physical, etc.) of the lives of women. The orientation of this project has been to demonstrate how a dynamic metaphysics can

\(^{526}\) For example, the exploration of questions about the role of genetics in sexual biology and orientation is merely in its infancy.
address the rightful feminist philosophical skepticism about the tendency of the Western metaphysical tradition to construct and support hierarchies that bolster patriarchy. I have shown how Lonergan’s dynamic conception of a metaphysics addresses the problem of binary dualism that has plagued the Western philosophical tradition. Such dualism led to the construction of binary hierarchies which validate hegemonic masculinity, associated with male biology as manifested by certain privileged male persons, as superior to forms of femininity ascribed to persons whose bodies manifest female biology.

The feminist authors considered in this work all variously articulate strongly positional insights about how the Western metaphysical tradition has supported the hegemonic masculinity associated with critiques of patriarchy. However, each of these feminist thinkers are limited in their analyses by counter-positional claims. For example, Luce Irigaray correctly insists upon reviving a notion of fluidity and movement within the Western metaphysical framework. She is also correct in her assertion that an inappropriately tellic notion of desire leads to a metaphysical framework that is static, solipsistic and biased. In addition she is right to reject the privileging of presence within the Western metaphysical tradition, as well as the notion of absolute space as a container. Yet, in her discussion of the morphology of the masculine body she seems to suggest that such an orientation is necessarily the result of, and perhaps a primary feature of, masculine embodiment. While she is correct to attend to the concreteness of embodiment, she insists upon a notion of sexual difference as ontologically fundamental, but overlooks the fact that there is an unrestricted human desire for the universe of being that is metaphysically fundamental.
Elizabeth Grosz is correct in her interpretation of embodiment with her insistence on attending to the concreteness, potentiality, and movement of the body and a wariness of the disordered ways in which the body is formed and viewed within culture. However, she is counter-positional in her failure to seriously address the question of whether there can be authentic or inauthentic emergences and integrations of materiality. This problem arises as a result of her lack, or rejection, of a notion of finality.

Judith Butler is correct to identify traditional Western metaphysics as a primary source for the problem of binary dualism and hierarchy, as well as the static view of reality which she rejects. In addition, she is correct to insist upon the unrestrictedness of human desire and potentiality. However, she is incorrect to assume that all systems are static, an assumption which results from her lack of a notion of emergence and development. In addition, like Grosz, Butler is without a notion of finality which leads her to understand potency as unrestricted sexual and interpersonal desire. This leaves her without a framework to meaningfully address the ethical concerns that seem to underlie her opposition to the normalization of heterosexism.

Moira Gatens is insightful in pointing toward a contingent relation between sex and gender, as well as in her rejection of a dualistic conception of the subject. In addition she is correct to reject a behaviorist conception of the subject, associated with a naïve and limited account of social construction. As a result she correctly rejects the radical arbitrariness of the relation between the sex and gender suggested by Butler’s account of social construction. While Gatens’ account of the contingent relation between sex and gender is in many ways the most positional argument made by the feminist authors.
considered here, ultimately Gatens’ commitment to monism is incompatible with the fully positional notion of higher integrations, as well as an account of finality which is central to a dynamic metaphysics.

In the view of dynamic metaphysics, the construction of gender is far more complex than the organic development of sexual biology. Lonergan argues that organic sexual development is rather restricted in its potencies, while I argue that the dramatic emergence of the gendered subject is more dynamic. As discussed in Chapter Three, human beings shape their lives through a dramatic sort of social artistry which is “limited by biological exigence, inspired by example and emulation, confirmed by admiration and approval, sustained by respect and affection.”\footnote{Ibid., pg. 188.} We shape our behavior and interactions with others within a dynamic intersubjective context, and our gendered subjectivity arises out of this dynamic context.

Yet, as Moira Gatens and Cynthia Crysdale both convincingly argue, the relationship between sex and gender is not arbitrary. The dynamic patterning of human living occurs in concert with the other patterns, including the biological. As a result, the manifestation of gendered subjectivity is circumscribed by the realities of our embodiment. While we must respect these organic realities, an even greater respect is due to the most primordial norm of human experience, which Lonergan calls the ‘pure desire to know.’ Like gender, the pure desire to know is always manifest in a particular person under particular social, historical, and material conditions. Respect for the pure desire requires an authentic fidelity to the demands of one’s intelligence. As noted

\footnote{Ibid., pg. 188.}
previously, human beings condition and create our environments, our social realities, and our cultural values. Our molding and fashioning of our gendered selves are manifestations of this creativity. The challenge is to understand and implement gender norms which reflect the exigencies of our intelligence. As Lonergan comments while one’s choices can be reasonable or not, while they can be more reasonable or less, still one’s own rational consciousness is an accomplished fact in the field of knowing and it demands in the name of its own consistency its extension into the field of doing. Such is the dynamic exigence, the operative, moral imperative … It demands, not consistency in the abstract, but consistency in my consciousness, not the superficial consistency purchased by the flight from self-consciousness nor the illusory consistency obtained by self-deception and rationalization nor the inadequate consistency that is content to be no worse than the next fellow, but the penetrating, honest, complete consistency that alone meets the requirements of the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know.528

So, as with all other human choices and creative acts, we must strive for the creation of gender by the individual, as well as the construction of gender norms by communities and cultures, to be governed by honest, intelligent, and self-conscious acting. This aim is perhaps best expressed in Crysdale’s prescription for ‘revisioning natural law’: “not [by] defining ways in which persons should conform to nature, but clarifying the values implicit in interventions in nature, and stipulating which transformations are ultimately conducive to human flourishing and which are not.”529

529 Ibid.
Selected Bibliography

Books Related to Lonergan’s Thought


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**Books Related to Feminist Thought**


**Other Works Consulted**


**Book Chapters and Journal Articles**


Encyclopedia Articles and Newspaper Reports


