Transforming Desire: The Relation of Religious Conversion and Moral Conversion in the Later Writings of Bernard Lonergan

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TRANSFORMING DESIRE:
The Relation of Religious Conversion and Moral Conversion
In the Later Writings of Bernard Lonergan

A dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Transforming Desire:  
The Relation of Religious Conversion and Moral Conversion in the  
Later Writings of Bernard Lonergan  

by  

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This work argues that religious conversion sublates moral conversion and also, *de facto*, serves as a necessary foundation for moral conversion. Religious conversion acts this way by transforming the religiously converted subject’s feelings. Through this radical change in the subject’s motivation, and the consequent change in the kinds of meanings that constitute the subject, religious conversion also transforms the nature of the human good of which the subject is a part. It thereby provides the basis for the right ordering of the human good toward transcendent value and a supernatural end.
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INTRODUCTION

Find your delight in the LORD who will give you your heart's desire.
—Psalm 37:4

Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.
—Romans 5:3-5

In this work, I have one main question: “What is the relation of moral conversion to religious conversion in the later writings of Bernard Lonergan?” In other words, how and why does the gift of God’s love change us, according to Lonergan’s later theology, relative to our choosing the good for its own sake? It seems there should be some connection, and Lonergan in fact explains one. What is it?¹

The question is simple, but to answer it I will have to take some time. Lonergan’s collected works will compose twenty-two volumes, with the original compositions produced from the time of the Second World War on into the 1980s. Moreover, the topic I have chosen, namely “conversion,” occupied a great part of his attention in his later years.

I will argue that religious conversion sublates moral conversion and also, de facto, serves as a necessary foundation for moral conversion. Religious conversion acts this way by transforming the religiously converted subject’s feelings. Through this radical change in the subject’s motivation, and the consequent change in the kinds of meanings that constitute the subject, religious conversion also transforms the nature

of the human good of which the subject is a part. It thereby provides the basis for the
right ordering of the human good toward transcendent value and a supernatural end.\(^2\)

To explain what this thesis means and defend it, I will have to explain the
character of transcendental method, which characterizes Lonergan’s later works. The
conversions turn out to have a central place in the right operation of this method. To
explain them I will have to show them in their natural habitat.

The insights that developed into religious, moral, and intellectual conversion,
however, have a long history in Lonergan’s works. While I need not work through all
of Lonergan’s earlier theology and philosophy, it will be important to explain the
insights most important for this study, later transposed into the horizon of
transcendental method, as they occurred in their original settings. Especially in
*Method in Theology*, his central later work, Lonergan can be enthymematic. He does
not always specify entirely how things work—what goes into, lies behind, or connects
each of the points he is making. Understanding the character of the thought that is
being transposed can help to fill in those gaps, once the nature of this transposition is
understood.

The character of Lonergan’s thought and of his transcendental method,
additionally, is highly dialogical. The list of authors he cites or interacts with is truly
impressive. The conversation just in *Method in Theology* includes not only
theologians and philosophers, but scientists, psychologists of several different
schools, historians, sociologists, and literary scholars. Lonergan carefully listens to
his sources; in order to understand him, we will have to do the same. Again,

\[^2\] In order to avoid a potentially long ambiguity, let me here state something I will explain
more fully in the body of this work: “religious conversion,” in Lonergan’s terms, does not necessarily
imply adherence to any world religion. It is an inner word in which God speaks to and changes our
hearts. One may in fact be in or subsequently join a religious or philosophical tradition, but the outer
word of this tradition is distinct from the inner word of religious conversion.
understanding the insights in their original settings can help to understand what Lonergan means when he transposes the insights to within the horizon of *Method in Theology*.

In my first chapter, therefore, I argue for the way that I have found most helpful in reading Lonergan. In particular, I argue that there is significant continuity among Lonergan’s earlier and later writings. Based on this continuity, it is possible to draw on the earlier works to help understand key elements of his later thought, such as the nature of religious conversion.

The need for this argument is twofold: first, the terminology of the earlier works differs greatly from that of the latter; second, what characterizes Lonergan’s later writings, and largely accounts for the terminological shift, is that he develops the transcendental method most fully explained in *Method in Theology*. On verbal and methodical grounds, then, there is apparent reason to doubt the utility of his earlier thought for understanding his subsequent works.

Lonergan does give evidence of significant development in the course of his thought, and the differences go much deeper than the surface. However, he himself saw a great continuity between even his earliest published writings and *Method in Theology*. The relation I will argue for, then, is a genetic one, in which real growth (change) is possible but which maintains the genius of the former understandings in a new context.

It is not enough, though, simply to state the existence of this genetic relationship. Growth can sprout or branch in many different directions. To explain the relation in a way that helps me to answer my question I need to explain what transcendental method is and how it actually does transpose those former understandings into a new horizon.
In my second chapter, therefore, I begin with Lonergan’s great project in *Insight*, in which he invites his readers to appropriate their own ability to be knowers of the world. On the basis of what an attentive, intelligent and reasonable reader can discover about herself, Lonergan explains an empirical basis by which epistemology and metaphysics can be empirically grounded in the related and recurrent operations of human consciousness. This invitation to self-appropriation extends in Lonergan’s writings into the transcendental method of *Method in Theology*, in which he distinguishes four phases or levels of intentional consciousness: attending, understanding, judging, and deciding. In the right operation of the human consciousness, explained in these four phases, we come to know the true and choose what is of value. Discovering and assenting to true meanings and choosing right values is not something extrinsic to who and what we are as human subjects. Rather, these meanings and values constitute us as human subjects.

In-between the invitation to self-appropriation in *Insight* and the advancement of the invitation further in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan developed transcendental method.3 In this great advance, Lonergan worked to transpose the valid insights of medieval and modern Catholic theology and philosophy, into a horizon that fully acknowledged the historical nature of our being. In so doing, he had to show the brilliant but inadequate nature of the faculty psychology, which grounded the earlier theology and philosophy; and he had to show how to retain the insights gained by faculty psychology while going beyond it.

The work of my second chapter is to explain that transition. I do so by explaining, as best I can, the character of transcendental method, and by analyzing a

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3 To an extent, Lonergan was already doing interiority analysis in *Insight*, as I will explain in the body of this work. However, the full transcendental method, which is grounded by interiority analysis, does not appear until later.
number of ways it supersedes faculty psychology. My discussion includes two concrete examples—the transposition of theology proper, and of the Aristotelian/medieval concept of habit. Thereby, I hope to put flesh on the bones of the way to read Lonergan I have argued for in chapter one. By showing the shape and nature of the transposition into transcendental method, I explain and defend the way I will appropriate Lonergan’s early theology (of grace, for example) to help understand religious and moral conversion.⁴

Throughout this process, I take seriously the dialogical nature of Lonergan’s thought. Often, Lonergan will allude to or cite an author, indicating the influence of that author’s work in some respect. Sometimes (as often is the case with authors as pervasive in Lonergan’s thought as Augustine, Aquinas, or Aristotle), the influence will be unremarked upon but, nevertheless, clear.

In many cases I did not find it helpful in understanding Lonergan to leave the relation at the level of a citation or an allusion. Even with respect to authors a theological student would be expected to know something about, such as Aristotle or Karl Rahner, Lonergan often draws on aspects of their work that are important but not (or, no longer) widely known. And, as I stated above, Lonergan interacts with a wide variety of authors in a number of disciplines. For example, in that the present work is in many ways a study of the development and change in human motivation, developmental and clinical psychologists (Piaget, Maslow, Freud, etc.) have been important.

Therefore, at a number of points in this work, I take the time to explain the thought of some author with whom Lonergan is in conversation, at least in its most relevant aspects. My hope is that what was helpful for me will also be helpful for my readers.

⁴ These examples are not chosen randomly but are important bases for further discussion.
readers. It simply did not aid me that much, for instance, to read that religious conversion has the sense of the tremendous and fascinating mystery described by Rudolph Otto; it assisted me greatly to read Otto, find the insights Lonergan was appropriating, and set them out clearly in relation to Lonergan’s thought. While Lonergan always appropriates from his sources critically, never mechanically, I think it of great help in understanding him to examine the sources to which he points.

In my third chapter, I begin the explanation of the hierarchically ordered nature of the universe and of the human good. The conversions are, in one respect, solutions to problems in the human good; in another respect, they indicate how the human good is called to transcend its present limitations. Therefore, in both these regards, it is necessary for understanding the conversions to understand the human good that they are transforming.

Lonergan saw intelligible order permeating the whole of being. To explain this order, I examine two charts Lonergan offers—one from his earlier works and one from his later. The charts express the human good as it exists in a rich interplay of entities, operations and relations. In the earlier chart there is an explicit way in which the human good is directed toward the fulfillment of the world to come. However, even in the later chart (which specifically addresses only the human good) one can find a need for something more than human, a need to be healed and elevated by the action of God.

Therefore, in my fourth chapter, I examine the nature of the supernatural good toward which human life is ordered. In Lonergan’s later works, this sanctified human reality is explained as the horizon of faith; in his earlier, one speaks of the order of the supernatural. Lonergan explains that humans are placed and ordered within the horizon of faith by “religious experience.” On the basis of religious experience
(Lonergan in this regard refers to Otto, Paul Tillich and Ignatius Loyola), one is ordered toward transcendent value by the gift of God’s love, and thereby placed within the horizon of faith. Lonergan takes the transformation of love to elevate the operations of one’s consciousness in a way similar to how Maslow described the action of peak experience.

My question, though, does not have to do simply with the ultimate rightness of human living and being. What of conversion? Conversion would be unnecessary (or, at least, would appear radically different) were it not for the reality of sin. For us, entering the horizon of faith is not a seamless passage into a better reality. It is an about-face, in which we must come into a completely different horizon.

Lonergan’s indirect explication of sin has several aspects which I discuss in my fifth chapter. His explanation is indirect, because sin is a privation—a negativity—and in nothingness, there is nothing to understand. However, in its aspects of objective falsity, alienation, unauthenticity, biases, the dialectics of decline, and an objective surd, Lonergan explains the way sin distorts the relations and operations that constitute the human good.

Conversion relates us rightly to the world, to each other, and to God, but it cannot so elevate us without concurrently healing the havoc sin has wrought. Conversion places us in a new, better, horizon, and it does so either by operative or cooperative works of grace. In my sixth chapter, therefore, I explain what conversion is, and what each of the conversions (religious, moral, and intellectual) involves.

Conversion itself is repentance, and it is the beginning in us of new life. In conversion, we either freely cooperate with God’s grace to choose a new horizon, radically different from our previous one, or we are placed in a new horizon by grace and thereby made free. Conversion transforms our conscious operations. Insofar as
who and what we are is embodied in sets of meanings that inhere within those conscious operations, conversion changes all of our personal, historical and social being.

As I explain in chapter six, religious conversion is the fundamental religious experience that places us in right relation to God. It is the gift of God’s love, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that places and orients us within the horizon of faith. Moral conversion places us in right relation to the good, for in it we choose the good for its own sake, simply because it is of value. Intellectual conversion places us in right relation to truth, for in it we appropriate what it means that we are knowers and take on the right attitude toward knowing the world. In these three basic ways, the rectitude of our conscious operations is motivated, and to an extent, achieved.

With these explanations in place, I am able to progress directly to answer my main question: “What is the relation of moral conversion to religious conversion?” My answer has two stages, one in chapter seven and one in chapter eight. In chapter seven, I discuss the nature and function of feelings, as understood by Lonergan. In chapter eight, I discuss how the transformation of those feelings transforms the whole human good.

Lonergan draws on the works of Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand in constructing his own notion of feelings. Feelings are intentional responses to value. Far from being mere decoration on the landscape of conscious intentionality, feelings provide the motivation for all of our conscious operations by revealing to us and

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5 It would be interesting, of course, to include intellectual conversion in this discussion. How does it relate to moral and religious conversion? This topic is quite important to Lonergan, and I do mention it in my final chapters. However, including it would make an already big question unmanageable. Three extra relations would have to be discussed: the relation of moral and intellectual conversions, the relation of intellectual and religious conversions, and the relation of moral and intellectual conversions (taken together) to religious conversion. While such an exploration is undeniably important, it exceeds what I can do in this work.
orienting us toward what is valuable. The most fundamental feeling-states possible for us are being oriented toward the transcendent value of God and toward the immanent value of the good for its own sake. These feeling-states are religious and moral conversions. Being oriented toward God grounds and makes possible our right orientation toward the good. God is both the greatest good (absolutely) and the greatest good of every other good; furthermore, the gift of God’s love frees us from our slavery to concupiscence and pride.

Being rightly ordered toward the good and toward God changes every aspect of human meaning. To help explain that transformation, I examine the kinds of meaning Lonergan discusses in *Method in Theology*: intersubjective, aesthetic, symbolic, linguistic, and incarnate. Taken together, these meanings constitute us and the human good in which we participate. By being rightly ordered toward transcendent value, the operations and relations that constitute us and the human good become rightly ordered to each other. The conversions provide these guiding orientations. To be good, the human good must transcend merely being human, for the right orientation of religious conversion is a gift to us (personally, historically, socially) of the life of God. In cooperating with that gift, we change the character of the human good; prayer, common prayer, and worship more and more describe the operation of the human good as it responds to the divine initiative.

Therefore, religious conversion sublates moral conversion and, *de facto*, provides a necessary foundation for moral conversion. Religious conversion draws moral conversion into the horizon of orientation to the greatest good—God. Moral conversion thereby is both elevated into a higher context and, conversely, becomes more itself. For the way of sacrificial love comes to be seen for what it actually is—the most choiceworthy way. Moral conversion needs the foundation of religious
conversion in order to understand and rightly value that way. Even with respect to choosing lesser paths to the good, we fallen ones are dominated by the effects of sin; while moral conversion addresses many aspects of bias, the sufficient foundation for this healing is only the gift of God’s love.

In explaining and defending my thesis, the heart of my methodology is a careful examination of the works of Lonergan. I have, of course, benefitted from the labors of Lonergan scholars. Without the help and guidance of Lonergan’s students and the secondary literature, I doubt I could have written any single page. Likewise, exploring the sources on which Lonergan drew has been important for my ability to develop and defend my thesis. However, my primary recourse is to the works of Lonergan himself.

This dissertation has depended on the help and kindness of many people. I especially would like to thank my director, Frederick Lawrence, and also the members of my committee, Charles Hefling and M. Shawn Copeland. Dr. Copeland graciously agreed to take on reading a Lonergan dissertation in the final semester, due to one of my original readers’ going on sabbatical. To John Darr, that original reader, I am also grateful. Dr. Lawrence and Dr. Hefling have labored over my time at Boston College to set me in the right way; any failures herein are my own, any successes no doubt show the marks of their care. I would also like to thank Matthew Lamb and Louis Roy, who likewise worked to educate a young scholar into a more comprehensive way. Also, to John Castelein, who taught me much and first introduced me to Lonergan, and to Robert Rea, who gave me my first thorough teaching in the theology of grace, I am grateful. The writing of this dissertation took place during my first two years teaching at Lincoln Christian College. It would not have been possible without the support of the school, and I would like in particular to thank Academic Dean
Karen Diefendorf, Vice President of Academics Tom Tanner, my faculty mentor, Associate Dean Neal Windham, and my first supervisor, then Associate Dean Fred Johnson. I would also like to thank my colleague Christopher Simpson, whose friendship and thoughtful conversation I have come to value over many years. Not quite last, but dear to my heart, I would like to thank my wife, Violeta, whose support is always with me and who endured the long hours of research and writing necessary for a work such as this. Finally, but first of all, I would like to thank the gracious God who moves our hearts and calls us to God’s own truth. To God be glory forever.
Chapter 1
Earlier and Later Lonergan

This work is one of interpretation, and it has one main question. The question is, “What is the relation between moral conversion and religious conversion?” In other words, I am wondering how the choice to live for true values and not just self-regarding satisfactions is related to being changed by God’s love. In answering this question, I am interpreting Bernard Lonergan’s later writings, which deal explicitly with these conversions.

In answer, I will argue that religious conversion sublates moral conversion and also, *de facto*, serves as a necessary foundation for moral conversion. Religious conversion acts this way by transforming the religiously converted subject’s feelings. Through this radical change in the subject’s motivation, and the consequent change in the kinds of meanings that constitute the subject, religious conversion also transforms the nature of the human good of which the subject is a part. It thereby provides the basis for the right ordering of the human good toward transcendent value and a supernatural end.

Although I am working to interpret Lonergan’s later writings, I will of necessity often refer to his earlier works. Now, the intrepid reader who traverses Lonergan’s early writings and then turns to his later work might easily believe that Lonergan himself experienced quite a turn. For, while many of the concerns seem the same, the language used to explore those concerns markedly differs. While in the early works such Aristotelian terms as soul, will, intellect, act, potency, and habit delimit the discussion,
one looks in vain for this organization in *Method in Theology*.\(^1\) Instead, one finds an author whose concern is the human subject to be known in her conscious intentionality.\(^2\)

This chapter, and the one that follows it, propose to introduce this interpretive challenge and to set the basic terms under which I hope to surmount it, because the insights of Lonergan’s early work greatly assist us in coming to an understanding of the way he comes to relate morality and religion in love. In this chapter, I introduce the problem of the earlier and later Lonergan. In chapter two, I develop Lonergan’s own transcendental method and show how that method incorporates the valid insights of the faculty psychology which pervades Lonergan’s early works. Having explained these relations and developments will then allow me to give a much more adequate answer to my main question in my concluding chapters, as well as a better development of the human good in chapter three.

**Illustration of the Shift or Turn to Intentionality Analysis**

The mode of writing employed in *Grace and Freedom*, and the rest of Lonergan’s early work on grace or knowledge, can be described as employing Scholastic faculty psychology.\(^3\) As a way of talking about the human person, faculty psychology has its roots in Aristotle, and I will explain the most relevant aspects of his faculty psychology in

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2. See, for example, the call Lonergan issues when introducing his transcendental method to discover the intending subject in an analysis of the operations of that subject. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 2nd ed. (1973; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 15 (page numbering herein follows the reprint edition); this work may hereafter be abbreviated as *Method*.

chapter two.\footnote{For a discussion of Aristotle’s view of the soul, including its connection to his physics and metaphysics and grounding reference to the thought of Plato, see Giovanni Reale, Plato and Aristotle, ed. and trans. by John Catan, A History of Ancient Philosophy 2 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 303-312.} In my second chapter, I will also discuss how Lonergan overcame many of the limitations Aristotle’s philosophy bequeathed to medieval theology.

In Lonergan’s early work interpreting Aquinas, one can expect that Lonergan will use the terms and distinctions of medieval faculty psychology. One must remember, though, that through the canonization of Aquinas and the papal directing of all Catholic theologians to follow his method, Aquinas’ terms and distinctions became the standard tools of Catholic theology.\footnote{Especially this was true after such authorizations of Aquinas’ work as Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical, Aeterni Patris. “Aeterni Patris: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Restoration of Christian Philosophy,” The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris_en.html (accessed May, 2008).} When Lonergan was publishing his Grace and Freedom articles, he was using the vocabulary current in Catholic theology. While these works were mainly historical, the transition to systematic theology did not require a transformation of terms. When he put together instruction notes or books for his theology classes, Lonergan used much the same terminology and distinctions.\footnote{See Bernard Lonergan, The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ, trans. by Michael Shields from the 4th ed. of De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 7 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), in which the traditional forms of faculty psychology are supplemented and shaped by thought forms and vocabulary characteristic of Lonergan’s later work. Also see Lonergan’s work, as yet unpublished, De Ente Supernaturali: Supplementum Schematicum, ed. by Frederick Crowe (1946; re-edited Toronto: Regis College, 1973). When referring to the Latin text of this work (the original), this study uses the 1959 text, “Of Supernatural Being,” The Neith Network Library, http://www.beautytruegood.co.uk/ellul4.htm (accessed May, 2008); in English, I follow Michael Shields’ unpublished translation, for access to which I thank J. Michael Stebbins. I also found helpful John Brezovec’s English translation of this work in its 1966 form (Boston College Lonergan Center, 66.12.2).}

While Lonergan’s early writings are suffused by the forms of faculty psychology, his later writings discuss the human person in quite a different way. Perhaps this development in the way Lonergan wrote can best be illustrated by quoting two passages...
which may come to be seen as having parallel topics, one from *Grace and Freedom* and one from *Method*:

From *Grace and Freedom*:

Nonetheless, in both cases [actual grace and habitual grace] the same theory of instrumentality and of freedom is in evidence: the will has its strip of autonomy, yet beyond this there is the ground from which free acts spring; and that ground God holds and moves as a fencer moves his whole rapier by grasping only the hilt. … In habitual grace, divine operation infuses the habit, to become cooperation when the habit leads to free acts; in actual grace divine operation effects the operation of the will of the end to become cooperation when this will leads to an efficacious choice of means….7

From *Method in Theology*:

Being in love with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion. All love is self-surrender, but being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations. Just as unrestricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfillment of that capacity.

That fulfillment is not the product of our knowledge and choice. On the contrary, it dismantles and abolishes the horizon in which our knowing and choosing went on and it sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of love will transform our knowing.8

In the first passage, the language and forms of Scholastic faculty psychology are clear (“habitual grace,” “actual grace,” “habit,” “will”). In the second, terms such as “self-surrender,” “horizon,” and “self-transcendence” are used. Moreover, the first passage analyzes the different aspects of the grace-receiving human soul; the second analyzes the experience of the love-receiving human self. Specifically, the second focuses on an analysis of the transformed and transforming subject’s intentional


consciousness. It exemplifies the “transcendental method” of Lonergan’s later works, a method proceeding by what he terms “intentionality analysis.”

The present study sets itself to understand the later thought of Bernard Lonergan concerning the relation of human moral action and religious transformation. Lonergan’s later writings are obviously central for this project. However, Lonergan is one author, not two, and some relation can be expected among his different works. The existence of these two divergent ways of writing therefore raises a number of questions. Do two sets of meanings exist between Lonergan’s earlier and later writings, or merely two divergent terminologies? If meanings do differ, to what extent and in what way? What is the relation between the two sets of writings (and another set that might be described as “middle”)?

What is the reason that when treating questions that seem quite similar, Lonergan uses such different ways of proceeding?

Probably Inadequate Influences

It seems that such a substantial shift in procedure might simply be explained by the thirty-one years that came between the publications of these two works. Any author can be expected to use new words now and again. Terminologies, interests and emphases may vary by season of life. Authors of genius may be expected to have fewer limitations.

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9 Lonergan, Method, 13-20, 340-344. Lonergan’s transcendental method and intentionality analysis, as related to the subject of this study, will be discussed in chapter two.

10 Such as Lonergan, Constitution of Christ, as mentioned above.

11 The different chapters of Grace and Freedom were originally published as articles in Theological Studies in 1941-1942. The first edition of Method was published in 1972 by Herder and Herder (New York).
than most.\textsuperscript{12} Also, the language of Scholastic theology came to have less prominence in Catholic theological discussion following the Second Vatican Council.\textsuperscript{13}

Conversely, one might also suppose that this turn of method has to do with the expectations and purpose of each work. In \textit{Grace and Freedom}, Lonergan is speaking for Aquinas. He does have concern to speak to the present age, but he does so in this work by untangling what he saw as the correct understanding of Aquinas’ teaching from the thistles and hedges of inadequate interpretations. In \textit{Method}, however, Lonergan speaks for himself and on his own terms.\textsuperscript{14}

There exists, additionally, the difficulty of audience. Lonergan’s early work was mainly intended for a Catholic theological audience well-versed in Scholastic terminology. \textit{Method in Theology}, however, is written with at least some consideration of an ecumenical audience.\textsuperscript{15}

Finally, one must consider that the time in which Lonergan began his publishing career was a contentious one. Being a voice for new ideas, especially ones that dealt with aspects of religious experience or challenged long-standing terminologies, could involve

\textsuperscript{12} One may wonder if the variety and power of Shakespeare’s corpus motivate the persistent efforts to assign his works to other authors.

\textsuperscript{13} By the time of the present study, a noted Catholic ethicist can publish a work on theological bioethics without any index entry needed for “soul.” Lisa Cahill, \textit{Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice, and Change}, Moral Traditions Series (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005). While the transition away from Scholastic terminology was not as complete in 1971 as it is today, the de-emphasis was even then obvious in much of Catholic theology.

\textsuperscript{14} To use the analysis put forward in \textit{Method}, \textit{Grace and Freedom} is a work of interpretation that most properly inhabits the first four (historical) functional specialties; \textit{Method} intends to present Lonergan’s own theological and methodological conclusions to the present age.

\textsuperscript{15} Note the concluding paragraphs to \textit{Method} on “The Church and the Churches,” in which the ecumenical intent of the work is clear. Just as explicitly, Lonergan indicates the work’s ecumenical intentions at the end of the chapter on “Doctrines.” Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 332-3, 367-8.
one in a detrimental polemic. It could even raise suspicions of one’s orthodoxy with the leaders of one’s order or of the Church.\textsuperscript{16}

However, Lonergan seems more describable as an author who helped shape the times he lived in, not one who merely followed the conventions of the day. He did undergo a “tutelage” of reaching up to the greatest minds of the past (particularly Aquinas).\textsuperscript{17} However, the way in which he communicated the insights of this tutelage constantly spoke of re-discovering meanings to faculty psychology’s overly-familiar terms.

Neither does the great difference in terminology and way of proceeding seem reducible to the purpose and expectations of each work. While it is true that any author seeking to interpret Aquinas’ thought will most naturally have recourse to Aquinas’ terms, Lonergan also sometimes uses the Scholastic terminology when speaking of a present synthesis of views and in his own voice.\textsuperscript{18} One must additionally wonder why Lonergan would choose to undertake and publish such an intensive, re-defining interaction with a set of terms and meanings unless these terms and meanings had some importance for him.

The difference of audience seems of more weight than the preceding two possible explanations. \textit{Theological Studies}, the journal where the articles that came to compose \textit{Verbum} and \textit{Grace and Freedom} were originally published, is a Jesuit sponsored

\textsuperscript{16} Consider, for example, the situation of Lonergan’s fellow Jesuit Henri de Lubac following his publication of \textit{Surnaturel} in 1946. See Jim Kanaris, \textit{Bernard Lonergan’s Philosophy of Religion: From Philosophy of God to Philosophy of Religious Studies} (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 19.


\textsuperscript{18} See, for example, Bernard Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, passim.
De Ente Supernaturali is a work of Lonergan’s own views, but it was used to teach mostly Catholic students. As late as 1959, a time by which the Scholastic terminology had ceased having a central place in Lonergan’s writings, he speaks unflinchingly of “habit” and “soul” to a group of Catholic educators. As any good speaker, Lonergan adverted to the frame of reference of his hearers.

A view which gives great explanatory weight to the importance of audience in solving the present conundrum, however, seems to give adequate weight neither to the progress of understanding within Lonergan himself nor to the way Lonergan labored to transform his hearers. Grace and Freedom, De Ente Supernaturali and Verbum labor to transform the understanding of Lonergan’s readers within the thought-framework of faculty psychology. Method in Theology, along with a great part of Lonergan’s later work, labors to assist Lonergan’s readers in moving out of that thought-framework into something more appropriate and useful. Even concerning Insight, which is either the culmination of his early work or the beginning of something new, he comments, “While I still spoke in the terms of faculty psychology, in reality I had moved out of its influence

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20 See Frederick Crowe, Discovering the Lonergan Legacy: Historical, Theoretical, and Existential Themes, Michael Vertin, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004), 79n6.


22 See, for example, the chapter on “Communications” in Method in Theology, especially pp. 362-3. This outworking of communications expands and puts flesh and blood to the problem and process described by “The Truth of Interpretation” in the chapter on “Metaphysics as Dialectic,” in Bernard Lonergan, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, ed. by Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 585-617. Hereafter abbreviated as Insight.
and was conducting an intentionality analysis.”23 Lonergan was capable of being a faculty-psychologist when among the faculty-psychologists, but the overriding determinants seem to be the meanings he toiled to appropriate and the transformation he was hoping to effect, not the expectations of the listening crowd.24

The exigencies of mid-twentieth-century Roman Catholicism with respect to polemic and controversial issues similarly seem to warrant consideration in understanding the mode of Lonergan’s early authorship. Lonergan did not love controversy.25 What shape would Lonergan’s early writings have taken in an environment that promoted not only genius but also creativity?26 It is difficult to measure.

One may indeed argue that Lonergan’s exploration of religious experience, so central to Method in Theology, was delayed due to the tension and attention such would have generated during the 1940s and 1950s.27 However, my study has to do not so much with Lonergan’s explanatory examination of religious experience but with his turn from faculty psychology to what he would term intentionality analysis. These discussions are related but are not the same. While Lonergan’s development of religious experience may


24 See Crowe, Lonergan Legacy, 80, in which Crowe notes that Lonergan’s first determinate during the long process of this shift was making Catholic theology intelligible to himself.

25 See Kanaris, Philosophy of Religion, 17-22.

26 It would not be accurate to paint pre-Vatican II Catholicism as entirely repressive. Catholic scholars remained free, and in any case were responsible to their conscience before God. Room for genius did exist, and even room for genuine creativity. However, it simply was often more wise to express that creativity in language and thought-forms harmonious with ecclesial expectations. Authors who sounded widely divergent or who openly pushed the boundaries could need defending—for example, Henri de Lubac’s repeated championing of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

27 Jim Kanaris has argued exactly this in Philosophy of Religion, 17-22.
have waited later than necessary due to factors extrinsic to Lonergan, the turn to intentionality analysis seems better explainable by an intrinsic growth of understanding and attendant change in judgment concerning who the human subject is and how that human subject validly appropriates the real, the good and the true.  

My study does not here intend comprehensively to trace the advancement of Lonergan’s thought. That project would be a book in itself, and has already been taken up by able hands. The discussion in this section is intended merely to bring to the reader’s attention a problem in interpreting Lonergan’s authorship that this study has to face by stating the problem and working through some (so-far inadequate) explanations of it. For, while it is true that the documents here in question are those of Lonergan’s later authorship, it is clear from that authorship that understanding the later will involve reference to many of his earlier materials.

In some cases where such integration is necessary for understanding Lonergan’s later work, he explicitly spells out what he is doing, what the history is, what he thinks of his past work and how it fits with the present. Here the interpreter may rejoice and bring the reference to the reader’s attention. In a number of these cases, nonetheless, the explanations are elliptic or compact, themselves in need of some mediation, expansion or interpretation. And, no author of Lonergan’s breadth of authorship is likely to spell out in detail all the important facets of the relation of his earlier and later work. Does “principle” mean something similar in a key passage in *Method* as it does in *De Ente*

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28 Lonergan, “Insight Revisited,” 276-278.

29 Frederick Crowe’s work is invaluable in this regard.
What about references to “conversion” and “radical orientation” in *Grace and Freedom*? To what extent can one validly appropriate such vocabulary to help understand its monumental development in *Method*?

These questions, and many others, do affect the present work. In my examination of the horizon of faith and religious conversion in chapters four and six, I will need to move intelligibly from Lonergan’s theology in *De Ente Supernaturali* and *Grace and Freedom* into the horizon of his later theological method. It is therefore advisable that, having drawn the reader’s attention to this particular problem, I should try to offer a rationale for how I will attempt this integration. Before the discussion of intentionality analysis proper, however, some explanation and *apologia* are here given in hopes that they will aid the reader to assess the validity of my conclusions.

**A Possibly Relevant Way of Appropriation**

In *A True Story*, the ancient satirist Lucien of Samosata has his protagonist travel to the Elysian Fields and ask the poet Homer the great question of his Hellenistic interpreters: Why Homer started the Iliad with “mēnis (wrath)?” Homer answers him that “houtōs epelthein autō mēden epitēdeusanti (it just came into his head that way, without any study).” While Lucian cautions his reader that nothing in his book really is

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30 Lonergan, *Method*, 240; *De Ente Supernaturali*, 1.4 (unless otherwise noted, sections references to *De Ente Supernaturali* follow Shields’ translation).


33 Ibid.
true (except, perhaps, that very caution?), his satire does serve as a warning to all would-be interpreters of texts.34 One must be careful.

Thankfully, the modern interpreter of Lonergan has much more evidence to work with than the Hellenistic (or modern) interpreter of Homer. Yet, Lonergan himself gives cautionary notes on expecting a pedantic exactitude in any author’s use of words. One of the more instructive instances arises surrounding Lonergan’s comments on Aquinas’ use of the term “actio (action).”

In his early writings, Lonergan comments on this usage three times.35 In each case, Lonergan asserts that Aquinas uses the word in two senses, without comment, according to the flow of discussion or the point he intended to make. In examining Aquinas’ reception and development of these senses from Aristotle and his interpreters, Lonergan declares the following:

As when the waters of two rivers flow alongside each other, so the two sets of definitions persist in the writings of Aquinas. He uses whichever suits his immediate purpose, and, as is the way with intelligent men, he does not allow a common name for different things to confuse his thinking.36

Note that Lonergan does not credit Aquinas with ambiguity but with a versatility that should lead to clarity because each use of “action” finds adequate definition from its context.37

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34 Ibid., Book I.


36 Lonergan, Verbum, 127.

37 See Lonergan, Grace and Freedom, 70n23.
With this example in mind, one must also state that Lonergan gives every evidence of being a man who considers carefully what he says, who searches out the right words and structures to communicate the meaning he is intending. Despite his argument for Aquinas’ sometime verbal ambivalence, Lonergan spent an amazing amount of effort searching out exactly what Aquinas’ words did mean. It was exactly this herculean work that led him to the conclusion that sometimes Aquinas did not find exact verbal uniformity helpful.

An engagement with Lonergan’s authorship thus leads one clearly to the conclusion that his words are intended to convey meanings, and that he was judicious in choosing just which ones would do that job. On many occasions, this creative punctiliousness extends to the making of new terms or the re-making of old ones. Lonergan uses these new (or renewed) terms to communicate more fully, or in a less historically loaded context, what a traditional word should properly mean; or, sometimes he corrects some fallacies inherent in a traditional word and draws it into a more comprehensive type of analysis.38

As an interpreter of Lonergan, then, I propose the following principle. This study will expect of Lonergan the verbal flexibility usual “with intelligent men,” and it will bear in mind the important progress Lonergan makes from one period to another. Nonetheless, it will carefully appropriate terms and phrases from each stage of Lonergan’s authorship in a way that gives Lonergan credit for thinking carefully about what he wrote and being able to remember (for the most part) what he had written before. The determining factor for this appropriation will be the context of each passage.

What is aimed for is not verbal regularity but understanding of a sometimes developing meaning. Especially, this study will advert to and try to understand words and passages in the overall frame of reference Lonergan employed in each case (whether faculty psychology, intentionality analysis, or something in-between). It takes as its hallmark a confidence that sees Lonergan as a unitary author, chastened with the consciousness of his self-described development.

Lonergan gives several classifications of ways that people disagree with each other, and therefore how one person over time could disagree with himself. Aside from purely semantic differences, in which disagreement results from misunderstanding of terms, Lonergan identifies modes of disagreement that are complementary, genetic, and dialectical. A complementary difference has simply to do with the difference in viewpoint between two differently developed people. These differences in viewpoint implicitly recognize the validity of each other, but result from one person being a physicist, another a lawyer, another a construction worker, another a homemaker and mother of twelve. Given more information, or walking a mile in the other person’s shoes, the differences would probably resolve themselves. Disagreements can also be genetic in nature. They are different stages in a continuous development and are not contemporaneous within a particular group or biography. For example, Tertullian’s technical but fairly blunt discussion of the Trinity in terms of substance precedes and prepares for the more developed work of Augustine and the Cappadocians. Thus, although these differences cannot be reduced to differences in viewpoint, for the viewpoint of the later group probably includes that of the former while purifying and going beyond it, agreement might be expected if the former author could have received
the later, higher, but still-connected horizon. Some disagreements, however, reflect radical difference. They do not result from differences of perspective, nor are they reducible to a relation describable as genetic. For agreement to be achieved, something fundamental would have to change for at least one of the disagreeing parties. These disagreements Lonergan terms dialectical.39

Within this framework, I look first for an important unity between the early works that Lonergan wrote and his later ones, unless there is some kind of evidence of a change. With respect to the early works and the later ones a serious and intelligible relationship is sought. The terms used and the mode of expression are in some cases obviously different. Yet, it seems most in keeping with Lonergan’s historical criterion first to expect those differences to be complementary or genetic, unless there is evidence of the confrontation and negation of proper dialectic.

The primary key to this process, as followed here, is Lonergan’s own self-descriptions, supplemented by the biographies and materials of his contemporaries that give insight into the development of Lonergan’s thought. Lonergan was a self-aware author. In Method itself, and in a number of other addresses and writings, Lonergan spoke of how his mind had changed and how it had stayed the same.40 Likewise, Lonergan’s students and friends give invaluable evidence to the interpreter.

Over everything else, of course, there is the immanent intelligibility of the writings. Lonergan was intensely interested to communicate what he found to be ground-breaking and deeply-needed truths. I do not claim to have the authority to tell anyone


40 See, for example, “Insight Revisited,” 263-278.
what Lonergan thought; but, in the presenting of Lonergan’s later doctrine on grace, and
in the attempted integration of the early material into the late, I will give the reader a
chance to judge the success of this enterprise for herself.

With respect to that intelligibility, an important aspect to constructing the relation
between Lonergan’s early and late writings is what this study will call purifying
sublation. Lonergan speaks repeatedly of sublation in his writings, and this principle will
be of major importance to the present study. A precise definition of what Lonergan
meant by sublation will have to wait for chapter three. To rough-hew a definition,
however, Lonergan saw sublation as the incorporation of a reality into a new, broader or
higher, reality or context in a way that de-centers the former reality but, paradoxically,
makes it more itself.41

Of central importance to the use of sublation in the construction of this relation,
note that the higher reality or context does not negate the lower reality.42 To the contrary,
the lower finds in the higher its true home. I prefer to add the adjective “purifying,”
however, because Lonergan goes to extensive lengths to show how truth’s finding its true
home can involve removal of illusion, misconception and bias.43 While genuine insight

41 See Lonergan, Method, 240-243. He referenced Karl Rahner’s view of sublation in Karl
Rahner, Hörer des Wortes (Munich: Kösel, 1963), 40. Rahner’s view of sublation was placed in contrast to
Hegel’s (destructive/negating) view of sublation. See George W. F. Hegel, The Encyclopaedia Logic, with
the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze, tr. by T. F. Geraets, et

42 My third chapter will discuss the difference between primary and secondary negation with
respect to sublation. Briefly to anticipate that discussion, a primary negation involves a repudiation or
dissolving of the lower reality’s essence or central insight. Sublation, as developed by Lonergan, does not
regularly involve primary negation.

43 See Lonergan, Method, 351-353.
itself will not be negated by the higher context that sublates it, the up-lifting to that higher context may require substantial corrections.44

Lonergan evidences this practice of purifying sublation in addressing the work of other authors and his own earlier work because he believed that any significant truth achieved is a genuine work of the human spirit.45 As a star example, he directly addresses his early work on Aquinas with respect to continuity of meaning:

A fourth factor making for continuity is the occurrence in the past of genuine achievement. I have done two studies of the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. One on *Grace and Freedom*, the other on *Verbum*. Were I to write on these topics today, the method I am proposing would lead to several significant differences from the presentation by Aquinas. But there would also exist profound affinities. For Aquinas’ thought on grace and freedom and his thought on cognitional theory were genuine achievements of the human spirit. Such achievement has a permanence of its own. It can be improved upon. It can be inserted into larger and richer contexts. But unless its substance is incorporated in subsequent work, the subsequent work will be a substantially poorer affair.46

Notice that there is some need for purifying Aquinas’ work (improving upon it).47 Nonetheless, the work of incorporating Aquinas’ great achievement into a wider or higher context will not negate the thought of Aquinas on grace or cognitional theory; rather, the great achievement of Aquinas will be better understood once brought into a “larger and richer” context.

44 “So Lonergan’s central project of self-appropriation demands several different kinds of reversals or conversions even to get off the ground.” Frederick Lawrence, “Lonergan’s Postmodern Subject,” in *Lonergan and Contemporary Continental Thought: In Deference to the Other*, ed. by Jim Kanaris and Mark Doorley (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2004), 115.


47 Even in the context of his earlier studies, Lonergan pointed out that, through no fault of his own, Aquinas had taken over the best then-current cosmology, complete with movement of the celestial spheres. The physics of this cosmology, incorporating motions and pre-motions, had an impact on how Aquinas worked out his views on grace. In order validly to appropriate Aquinas’ work on grace one needs to purify it of this mistake. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 78-79.
Lonergan’s early work, like the great cathedral of meaning one finds in Aquinas, constitutes a genuine achievement of the human spirit. While the development of his hermeneutic frame is undeniable, Lonergan’s own later work was enriched by incorporating the insights gained therein. Our understanding of Lonergan will be impoverished without a thorough, up-lifting and purifying, incorporation of his earlier labors.

In approaching Lonergan’s work this way, I find it best to look first for the “great affinities,” bearing in mind the higher viewpoint of intentionality analysis (discussed below), before interpreting tensions or divergences in Lonergan’s work as strictly dialectical. Lonergan’s own comments, the witness of his students and friends, and the intelligibility this I find in Lonergan’s writings, point to a great continuity. While Lonergan’s perspective did change from a younger to an older theology professor, the differences between his early and later works will probably be mostly genetic in nature.48

In other words, I do not find evidence that Lonergan experienced a negative “turning” or “Kehre” of the type or magnitude often attributed to Martin Heidegger.49 Without attempting an analysis of Heidegger, the point for this study is that in his supposed Kehre, Heidegger’s later work was an abandonment of Being and Time, or a decision that the project (Being and Time was Part I) was fundamentally unworkable.

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48 See above discussion of complementary, genetic and dialectical disagreements.

49 Some interpreters of Lonergan have applied this term, and the attendant analogy, to Lonergan’s development. See Kanaris, Philosophy of Religion, 9-22 (who does not accept at face value such a divided-against-himself interpretation of Lonergan). It is not the business of this study to decide if Heidegger actually did experience the Kehre, or whether the relation of his later work to Being and Time is something similar to what this study argues for with Lonergan’s early and later work. Nor do I deny that Lonergan evidenced some kind of Kehre, or turning. I only argue that the result of this turn was not an abandonment of his earlier work. See William Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, 2nd ed. Phaenomenologica 13 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967) in favor of the Kehre, and Laurence Paul Hemming, “Speaking out of Turn: Martin Heidegger and die Kehre,” International Journal of Philosophical Studies 6 (October 1998): 393-423, arguing against it.
Lonergan’s work evidences the great shift to transcendental method and intentionality analysis, and religious experience came to play a role barely hinted at in earlier work. The significance of these changes constitutes part of the justification for this study’s concentration on Lonergan’s later works. But, seeing Lonergan’s progress as such a negating Kehre would militate against the “profound affinities” spoken of above. Purification and up-lifting differ from primary negation.

A view of Lonergan that emphasizes growth with continuity resonates with the reflections of Lonergan’s principal biographer:

It should be understood, however, and is worth an explicit declaration, that we are dealing with a steady flow rather than with discrete building blocks. There is no sharp boundary between phase and phase of Lonergan’s evolution. We do not cross Rubicons, rather we explore unmapped territory, reaching plateaus that enable us to see what we have traversed, sometimes following inadequate directions and retracing our steps, and so on.  

An analogical reading of Lonergan’s early and later work, conducted with a view toward purifying sublation and guided by Lonergan’s own self reflections, reveals not an author divided against himself but an advancing, explanatory, exploratory, essentially unified communication of meaning.

Conclusion

Differences certainly exist between Lonergan’s early and later work. These differences center around what Lonergan described as the shift from faculty psychology to intentionality analysis. While differences in composition date, purpose, audience and theological atmosphere do factor into understanding this shift, the best explanations seem to have to do with advances in Lonergan’s understanding and judgments.

50 Crowe, Lonergan Legacy, 81.
Without expecting of Lonergan a pedantic verbal uniformity, I take his authorship to exhibit a fundamental unity. That is to say, the differences between the early and later work are manifest and important but do not constitute abandonment or primary negation. Understanding of how to incorporate Lonergan’s earlier work with his later work is pursued according to something like analogy, looking to Lonergan’s own self-analysis first for the key to how that proportion operates. Within this proportion a purifying sublation is expected that indicates relations that are mainly genetic.

This chapter has brought before the reader the question of how to relate Lonergan’s later work, the work after his shift to intentionality analysis, to his former. But, what exactly is intentionality analysis? How does Lonergan use it in a transcendental method, and what does that method entail? What aspects of faculty psychology especially needed to be modified or updated? What would it look like if one were to do that? In order to understand what Lonergan means in his discussion of religion and morality, this study must address these foundational aspects of his work. It is to that discussion that I now turn.
Chapter 2

From Faculty Psychology to Transcendental Method

In Joseph Pieper’s moving treatise on art and contemplation, *Only the Lover Sings*, he observes the following:

Man’s ability to *see* is in decline. Those who nowadays concern themselves with culture and education will experience this fact again and again. We do not mean here, of course, the physical sensitivity of the human eye. We mean the spiritual capacity to perceive the visible reality as it truly is.¹

In our restless movement through the world, in the concupiscence of our eyes, we are losing the ability to know this world we are rushing through. Saturated with seeing, we are afflicted with a blindness of the spirit that separates us from finding the true meaning of the world and of our lives.

It may seem strange to quote from a work concerned with beauty to help introduce Lonergan’s methodical theology. Nevertheless, as the remainder of this work will bring out, aesthetics, and the kind of feelings that make present to us the world, that present us to the world, are central to the success of our rational knowing. In these feelings we find the healing for the eyes of our spirit, and the stirrings of the divine.

In all the discussion of human knowing in this chapter, please remember that the fullness of Lonergan’s transcendental method is a unified engagement of mind and heart. Only the lover sings! Only the one who has been brought into the transforming horizon of love can see and sing of a world made in the love of God. Although Lonergan’s

¹ Joseph Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation*, tr. by L. Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 31 (emphasis original).
project begins with the technical precision of cognitional theory, it is not complete until
the healed and elevated human spirit finds its rest in the love and knowledge of God.

A Preliminary Question

In explaining Lonergan’s transcendental method, and the intentionality analysis
that it employs, I start with a question: What is one doing when one is knowing? It is not
the only question, but it is one of special importance to Lonergan. Perhaps this question
is not the first that occurs to us when trying to understand the relation of religion and
morality. However, in examining Lonergan’s answer to this question we may discover
the way he explores religious experience and the conversion of the human subject toward
seeking the good.

What is one doing when one is knowing? Even a cursory examination of the
history of philosophy will reveal that this question involves a series of major problems.
For example, starting backwards through this history, one sees many contemporary
philosophers answering, “Nothing!” They argue that human knowing is a null activity, or
at best a power-play having little to do with something worth calling “knowledge.”
Such views are rooted in the dark profundity of Friedrich Nietzsche and represent the
current flower of this searching but negating spirit.

Looking further back, one can see that this contemporary malaise harvests the
fruit of a long and difficult progression. It would be far beyond my purpose here to trace

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2 See, for example, Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of
Series of Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

3 See, for example, the striking opening to *Beyond Good and Evil*. “What in us really wants
“truth”?” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, tr. and ed. by W.
its development from the dawn of modern philosophy with Descartes’ rationalist
idealism, the back-and-forth progression of confident empiricism, idealism, and
empiricist skepticism, and the incomplete at resolution in Kant.4 What one can say here
is that in asking this question one is asking the question first of understanding, and then
of truth. How do we know truth? What is happening we think we do? What does that
mean?

Lonergan offers a reasoned and verifiable answer to the question of human
knowing.5 The purpose of this chapter is to understand at least the basic parts of
Lonergan’s transcendental method by which he attains that answer, because Lonergan
will use the same method to address questions of religion (and love) and morality (and
the good). This chapter first discusses the empirical basis of Lonergan’s method as he
charts the open but structured dynamism of human interiority. Second, it discusses the
transcendental method itself. Once those issues are settled, the chapter compares
Lonergan’s method and the faculty psychology it replaces, showing why Lonergan
believed that faculty psychology needed to be superseded by his method. To complete
that comparison, the final section of the chapter examines Lonergan’s use of Jean
Piaget’s developmental psychology to update and assimilate the concept of habit.

Empirical Basis

Lonergan’s discussion of the human relation to truth begins with inviting his
readers to self-appropriation, instead of asking his readers to consider human intelligence


in the abstract.\(^6\) The key is a thorough invitation to the reader to know herself.\(^7\)

Moreover, this knowing does not consider a human intellect as an already-defined metaphysical object.\(^8\) Instead, the very human self who is reading is invited to take possession of the knowledge of the self she is as a conscious subject, by scrutinizing one’s immediate self-consciousness as it attains the knowledge available to that subject through intelligent reflection and the development of meanings.\(^9\)

The move to take the conscious experience of the subject as foundational (or, more precisely, the operations of the subject’s consciousness as experienced, understood and verified—see below in section two) results from a number of motives. At a pragmatic level, the attempt to take as foundational pre-conceived metaphysical constructs (soul, \emph{res cogitans}, etc.) had proved un-fruitful because it begs too many questions. In fact, it had especially left the thematization of religious experience with a series of dichotomies it could not resolve, for example, the contrast between the passionate God of religious commitment and the abstract deity of theological

\(^6\) See Lonergan, \emph{Insight}, 13-14.


\(^8\) See the section below in this chapter on “Intentionality Analysis \emph{versus} Faculty Psychology.” For a good account of this distinction, and several of its permutations, see Bernard Lonergan, “The Subject,” in \emph{Second Collection}, 69-86.

\(^9\) For a thorough experience of this process and distinction, one may read the book \emph{Insight} in an attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible way. For shorter descriptions of this process, see, among others, Bernard Lonergan, “The Response of the Jesuit as Priest and Apostle in the Modern World,” in \emph{Second Collection}, 166-169 and Bernard Lonergan, “The Origins of Christian Realism,” in \emph{Second Collection}, 241-244.
development. Lonergan sought to circumvent these dead-ends by finding an account of belief and knowledge using the subject’s conscious self-appropriation.

Second, taking the dynamic experience of the subject as primary allows one to appropriate the communal and historical nature of human being. This is not possible for definitions, even very good ones, or metaphysical constructs. Conversely, Lonergan’s discussion of Dilthey elaborates on human subjects, concrete in their existence, intelligible and finding intelligibility as members of community in history. An analysis of the open and dynamic structure of the subject’s consciousness remains open to more of the data and accounts for these data with greater explanatory power than starting from a series of a priori propositions.

Third, a method that grows from empirical examination of the subject’s consciousness meshes organically with the view of insight into phantasm Lonergan learned from Aristotle and Thomas. If Lonergan’s historical interpretation is right, and the concepts that our minds use flow from insights into the objects of our inquiry as imaginatively represented, then a method that fits this reality would best begin with examining the data of one’s own consciousness. Surely, the functioning of one’s own consciousness is more primordial than the concepts that flow from that functioning; so,


11 Lonergan, Method, 115.


13 Cf. Lonergan’s discussion of the permanence of doctrines in Method, 302.

14 See the subscript (from Aristotle) on the title page of Lonergan, Insight. See also Lonergan, Verbum, 38-46.
Lonergan begins with these operations of consciousness, in order to understand and verify their nature and functioning.\textsuperscript{15}

Lonergan is of course not the first to attempt to base a method on the data of intending consciousness. After his discussion of Dilthey (mentioned above), Lonergan briefly discusses Husserl and Heidegger’s phenomenological methods.\textsuperscript{16} Lonergan’s approach differs from theirs, however, in that it transposes into contemporary terms the examination of the subject that he argued was indispensible for gaining hard-earned insights gleaned from a correct understanding of Thomas Aquinas’ own appropriation of Aristotle on insights into phantasm and of Augustine on the judgment of truth.\textsuperscript{17} Lonergan’s approach also seeks to root out and oppose what he considered fundamental errors in late-medieval and modern epistemology and cognitional theory, opposed by, and yet perpetuated by, Husserl and Heidegger.\textsuperscript{18}

The Examined Consciousness

In examining the “quite open structure of the human spirit,” Lonergan discerned a series of interrelated and recurring operations. To put quite simply a conclusion that has received extended and repetitive statement, Lonergan claimed that a thorough inventory

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{15} See Lonergan, Method, 187-188, for one description of how Lonergan saw this process functioning.

\textsuperscript{16} Lonergan, Method, 212-214.

\textsuperscript{17} Centrally, but not exclusively, evident in the articles that were later published as Verbum and Grace and Freedom.

\end{footnotesize}
of our conscious processes of discovery and verification reveals that human intelligence:
1) attends to data (experiencing); 2) reaches possible understandings of this data
(understanding); 3) formulates or expresses that understanding in definitions, concepts or
hypotheses; 4) checks whether such understandings are warranted by sufficient evidence
or not; 5) makes judgments of fact; 6) deliberates on possible courses of action; 7) makes
judgments of value; and 8) decides on choosing possible courses of action based on a
commitment to keep one’s action in conformity with one’s knowledge of what is true.19

The following chart attempts to tabulate Frederick Lawrence’s reflections on the
recurrent and related operations of consciousness, in their respective phases or stages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Sense experience</td>
<td>Sensations and sense perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>Questions for understanding: What is it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct insight</td>
<td>Intellectual illumination regarding some sense experience wondered about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formulation</td>
<td>Expression of direct insight in understanding: It could be this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Intellectual reflection</td>
<td>Questions for judgment: Is it really this? Is it really so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect insight</td>
<td>Intellectual illumination concerning the sufficiency or insufficiency of the evidence supporting each formulated expression, searching for a virtual unconditioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judgments of fact</td>
<td>Affirmation or negation of fact: Based on the evidence, it is this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Moral reflection</td>
<td>Questions for deliberation: Is it of value? Should I do it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberation</td>
<td>Assessment of various courses of action: Based on what I judge to be true, which course of action is best?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affective insight</td>
<td>Affective illumination: intentional responses to value through feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judgments of value</td>
<td>Affirmation or negation of value: This is of value; this is the right course of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Choice of action: I will do this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: The Phases of Conscious Intentionality

19 See Lonergan, Method, 6-9, for a summary of these four levels of intentional consciousness.
When operating well in phase I, we are receptive to data, attentive; in phase II, when we are operating well, we are intelligently forming understandings of that data, as we imaginatively represent it. Phases III and IV are reflective, operating on the understandings we have derived from the data of sense. In each of phases II-IV there exists a central moment of intellectual or affective illumination: insight either directly into the data as imaginatively represented, indirectly concerning the adequacy or inadequacy of the evidence supporting an understanding of the data thus formulated, or concerning the relative or absolute value of a given thing or course of action. Phases II-IV do not end with insight; an understanding must be formulated based on direct insight (phase II), reality must be affirmed or unreality denied based on indirect insight (phase III), a decision concerning action must be made in congruence with a judgment of value illuminated by affective insight (phase IV). Correct operation in phases III and IV happens when we are reasonable in our judgments of fact and responsible in our choices.

A thorough explanation of these phases or stages, especially of experiencing, understanding, and factual judgment, constitutes the burden of the book *Insight. Method in Theology* pays special attention to the subsequent level; in many ways this constitutes an advance in Lonergan’s thought from the horizon of *Insight*.

Relations of Consciousness

While the operations and stages are distinct, note that they are not hermetically sealed off from each other. One may consider aspects of interpenetration of these stages that are both proper and improper. A proper influence will have to do with influence that is intrinsic to and essential for the functioning of the conscious operation. The grist for
the mill of understanding is the data of senses and consciousness to which one attends. One cannot assess different understandings until those possibly correct understandings have emerged. Indeed, Lonergan describes the interrelation of the different stages as "intimate," and one of the greatest mistakes one can make concerning Lonergan’s works is to consider the stages he describes as mechanical, purely successive things.20 Lonergan is not describing dissected moments of a frozen human consciousness but rather the dynamically patterned flow of the human search for being and value, the erōs of a mind already in motion.21

Improper interrelations, as I define them, may not necessarily constitute malfunctioning of the operations. The designation simply points to relations and areas of influence that constitute remote conditions for the correct operation of each stage. For example, one’s prior understandings can have a deep effect on one’s ability to attend to data, and the courses of action one chooses to take can influence what one judges to be true or good.22 Of great importance for answering my basic question, I will explain how affective insight constitutes an improper (that is, remote) condition for the right operation of the first three phases of conscious intentionality.

As with the proper relations, which are relations of intelligible direct dependence, these improper relations do not invalidate the analysis of the operations as distinct. The operations or stages are, as stated above, intimately related and moments in one dynamic

22 See, for example, the analysis of tacit knowledge in Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1966), and the analysis of the tongue in the book of James. Note that the influences can be both beneficial (as in a concert pianist who has learned to hear different nuances in play) or detrimental (such as the actions of a person distracted or obsessed or inhibited).
flow. One can, however, analytically distinguish among different moments and operations, even if concretely, they are almost never fully separate.

Lonergan saw these gnoseological operations of human consciousness as of great importance for the structure of consciousness because he judged meaning to be a constitutive element of human consciousness.\textsuperscript{23} Consciousness is not some imaginary space that somehow allows mental operations to function. In that case, intelligence and meaning could be mere add-ons to consciousness, so to speak, the things that happen to be in the room. Rather, consciousness is a state that enables, accompanies and enacts meaning, so that meaning constitutes it as much as it is necessary for meaning.\textsuperscript{24} In the four levels of conscious intentionality, consciousness enables, accompanies and enacts meanings with which the human subject is engaged at empirical, intellectual, rational and responsible levels.\textsuperscript{25}

Transcendental Precepts

When functioning properly, these operations of consciousness do not act randomly. Lonergan saw them as following what he described as “transcendental

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} See Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 177-178.
\item \textsuperscript{24} See the section on “Empirical, Intelligent and Rational Consciousness” in Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 346-348.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 9. At the empirical level, one can “sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move.” At the intellectual level one inquires and comes to possible understandings of what one has empirically engaged. At the rational level, one gathers evidence, considers the variety of evidence, and passes judgment on what is or may be true. At the responsible level, “we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.” Ibid. In all of these cases, unless a supernatural act is occurring, the human subject is dealing with the world of being that is proportionate to (fit or suited for understanding and judgment by) human consciousness. See ibid., 22.
\end{itemize}
A transcendental, according to Lonergan, is a comprehensive, unrestricted and trans-cultural intending that moves one toward knowing being and choosing value. Matching each of the four stages, Lonergan claims the transcendental precepts urge one: 1) be attentive; 2) be intelligent; 3) be reasonable; and 4) be responsible. The transcendental precepts require the correct functioning of the operations at each of the four levels of conscious intentionality. These transcendental precepts, and the notions that they aim for, name the human capacity to seek and recognize the true, real, and good; these precepts and notions have trans-cultural reach, not per se according to the exact formulations of Lonergan but in the realities to which those formulations refer.

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28 In Lonergan’s use of “transcendental” one may wonder whether he has more affinity with the usage of Aquinas, Kant or Husserl. In a lecture, given in 1976, Lonergan partially addressed this question, stating, “Distinguish three meanings of the term, transcendental: the most general and all pervasive concepts, namely ens, unum, verbum, bonum, of the Scholastics; the Kantian conditions of the possibility of knowing an object *a priori*; Husserl’s intentionality analysis in which noēsis and noēma, act and object, are correlative.” Bernard Lonergan, “Second Lecture: Religious Knowledge,” in *Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, ed. by Frederick Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 145n8. In common with Kant, Lonergan is addressing something common to every normally functioning human consciousness. The transcendental is *a priori*, the condition of correct functioning of human knowledge. In common with Aquinas, Lonergan’s transcendentals are related to the notions of value (intending the good) and of being (intending the real, the knowing of which is the true). Aquinas, of course, also included the beautiful and the one among the transcendentals. In common with Husserl, a genuine correlation exists between the process of our knowing and the world as knowable. Regarding his appropriation of Aquinas, one might wish for a fuller treatment and incorporation of aesthetics in Lonergan’s seminal works (“one” finds expression in Lonergan’s development of unity, or *unum*). However, Lonergan does give a significant development of the aesthetic in *Topics in Education*, 208-232. The eighth chapter of this work will address aspects of Lonergan’s aesthetics. For “transcendental” in Aquinas, Kant and Husserl, see Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1996); Henry Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Elisabeth Stroker, *Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology*, Stanford Series in Philosophy (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

29 Lonergan’s definition of intentionality is the directedness of the desire to know, to understand, to love; that thought is about something. His definition corresponds roughly with that of Husserl, though it is much more comprehensive. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, tr. by D. Cains (New York: Springer Press, 1977).

In examining these transcendental precepts, one will see that the correctly functioning consciousness is operating in consideration of the other in a way that exceeds the capacity of biological extroversion. We wonder. We seek answers. We hope, fear and dream in harmony with or against a world that is greater than our intending self. We commit to courses of action that carry us beyond previous bounds.

As incarnate subjects, we always experience the world as it presents itself to us immediately. Such is the world of any correctly functioning animal (of this I will have more to say below when speaking of the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning). Human wonder allows us to transcend this immediate but limited world by seeking and finding meanings that rightly understand and sometimes constitute the real world. These meanings are not additions to the world of immediacy, Lockean secondary qualities that may or may not be added onto the primary qualities. They are correct understandings of the real world. Through them, we know reality.

Reality is also known to us, but differently, through our biological extroversion. Here, in Lonergan’s answer to the question of truth, we encounter the prospect and the drive of the human subject to self-transcendence. Wonder does not abrogate biological extroversion, but draws us to transcend it.

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31 See Lonergan, *Insight*, 207, for the basic drive of our animal or biological consciousness as extroversion. As Lonergan develops in *Insight*, 410, biological extroversion can cloud our understanding if it is made the measure and rule of understanding and judgment. A stronger basis for understanding the intentional nature Lonergan speaks of, when applied to the world of meanings, is the wonder Aristotle speaks of at the start of his metaphysics. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.1.


34 As Lonergan says in *Insight*, 14, on the contrary, the point here, as elsewhere, is appropriation; the point is to discover, to identify, to become familiar with, the activities of one’s own intelligence; the point is to discriminate with ease and from personal conviction between one’s purely intellectual
As Lonergan says, “Self-transcendence is the achievement of conscious intentionality.” It is neither an easy nor an automatic well-functioning of the operations of consciousness. But, it is, according to Lonergan, a possible one.

With respect to this correct functioning, Lonergan posits an ecstatic element in understanding and judging. “Ecstatic” in this case does not mean that one is out of one’s mind, but rather that genuine achievement in understanding and judging do place one beyond oneself, in vital though critical connection with a world that is not constituted solely by the self and in which the true and the good can be known. Genuine self-transcendence alone can fulfill the desire of wonder, that originating drive that initiates the intellectual process and seeks the achievement of true knowledge and responsible decision.

Intersubjectivity

Meaning, as a component of our consciousness, is not purely a personal possession. For, meaning lives in intersubjectivity. As Lonergan says:

activities and the manifold of other, ‘existential’ concerns that invade and mix and blend with the operations of intellect to render it ambivalent and its pronouncements ambiguous.

Lonergan agrees with Aristotle and Aquinas that knowledge must proceed not haphazardly but for the right reasons. The person who has achieved mastery of her own house with respect to knowledge will be able to differentiate, with ease and delight, which operations of her consciousness are directed by her ‘existential’ being and which operations analyze and transcend those concerns by searching for meanings.


36 See Lonergan, *Insight*, 343-371, on the self-affirmation of the knower. Exactly how certain aspects of the well-functioning work out is the question of this work.


Prior to the “we” that results from the mutual love of an “I” and a “thou,” there is the earlier “we” that precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion. This prior “we” is vital and functional. … It is as if “we” were members of one another prior to our distinctions of each from the others.  

Lonergan is not here promoting some kind of universal intellect or group-think. Instead, he adverts to our commonality with each other. Rather than being windowless monads, humans fundamentally share meaning and being with each other.  

In this view of intersubjectivity, “we,” is more fundamental than “I,” and “I” goes beyond “we.” An authentic self is a personal achievement. It involves not mere individuality but right relation to the world and to oneself, a right relation in which one has taken ownership of the conduct and being of the self and those relations. Once achieved, this genuine self is not an illusion; nor does it compromise the fundamentally intersubjective basis of meaning. Under this examination, some of the knowledge achieved in the genuine self-transcendence under discussion resembles an exitus-

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39 Lonergan, Method, 57.


reditus. In knowing the other one achieves a return to a basic stage of intersubjective meaning.

Much of the universe of being, of course, goes beyond the merely human. Different results of self-transcendence bring one to know and love a world that is completely independent of the self or even of any human subjectivity. Other results, by grace, may lead to a self-transcendence that is beyond human proportionality altogether.

Patterns and Differentiations

As explained in the previous section, Lonergan sought to understand and describe the operations of consciousness empirically. While still keeping in mind that a unitary human consciousness is in view, Lonergan analyzed the functioning of this consciousness in terms of several patterns of experience evidenced by human subjects. These patterns of experience include biological, aesthetic, intellectual, and dramatic ways of experiencing.

Building on the patterns of experience and extending their specificity, Lonergan also identified differentiations of consciousness, several aspects of which (with their relations) will be important for this work. At present, I simply note that in Method in Theology Lonergan distinguished among religious, artistic, theoretical, scholarly, and

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44 For a study of the theme of exitus-reditus in some relevant portions of the Christian tradition, see William Riorden, Divine Light: Theology of Denys the Areopagite (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 169-209, and Fran O’Rourke, Pseudo-Dionysus and the Metaphysics of Aquinas (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 234-240.

45 Lonergan, Method, 240-241; see also the first section of De Ente Supernaturali.

interior differentiations of consciousness, in addition to undifferentiated consciousness which will be present in any human subject.\(^\text{47}\) A number of others may also be present in different combinations depending on a given subject’s achievement.\(^\text{48}\)

Of special importance at this point is interiorly differentiated consciousness. Interiorly differentiated consciousness adverts to the data of consciousness and especially to the activity and interrelation of the conscious and intentional operations described above. Lonergan describes its function, \textit{vis-à-vis} theoretical consciousness, in this way:

While theoretically differentiated consciousness seeks to determine its basic terms and relations by beginning from sense experience, interiorly differentiated consciousness, though it must begin from sense, eventually deserts this beginning to determine its basic terms and relations by adverting to our conscious operations and to the dynamic structure that relates them one to another. It is on such a basis that the present method is erected.\(^\text{49}\)

Lonergan considered interiorly differentiated consciousness a great breakthrough, the one basis that could offer a reasonable solution to fourteenth-century skepticism (Duns Scotus and others), to the issue of the relationships among the natural sciences, and to the task of critiquing and purifying what he termed “common sense.”

Indeed, Lonergan also considered interiorly differentiated consciousness, and the transcendental method of exploring it, to be alone capable of placing “abstractly


\(^\text{49}\) Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 274.
apprehended cognitional activity within the concrete and sublating context of human feeling and of moral deliberation, evaluation and decision.”50 To answer the question of the influence of religious conversion on moral conversion, the interior differentiation of consciousness assumes an intrinsic importance. Lonergan termed the study of the operations of one’s consciousness in the interiorly differentiated pattern of experience “interiority analysis,” or “intentionality analysis,” which keeps the intentionality of the cognitive operations is in view.51 It is interiority analysis, realized in transcendental method, that distinguishes Lonergan’s works that of others and grounds the differentiated interrelation of religious conversion and morality that is the focus of this work.

Feelings and Values

Speaking of the functioning of human intelligence can seem like a rather bloodless affair, something that has to do with an overly-intellectual or emotionally stunted appropriation of the world. I have already mentioned reasons why Lonergan might not thoroughly have dealt with religious experience or the affective component of human living in his early works.52 In order to counteract this impression more fully, though, one may consider Lonergan’s views on feelings and values.

While the role of affectivity is not absent from Lonergan’s earlier work, feelings become extremely important in Method in Theology.53 As an intentional response,
feeling “gives intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power. Without those feelings our knowing and deciding would be paper thin.” While Lonergan’s view of feelings is the major point of chapter seven, two notes may clarify the role Lonergan associates with feelings. First, besides building on the twentieth-century work of Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand, Lonergan’s treatment of “feelings” seem to transpose Aristotle’s pathē (or Aquinas’ pati). Second, well-functioning feelings propel the human subject toward self-transcendence because they are intentional responses to value.

Value is a notion that Lonergan defines heuristically as what one searches for in asking questions for deliberation; value is thus the orienting goal of the fourth level of intentional consciousness. Value has to do with the question of the good. Note that value is not simply a number or quality assigned to some person or thing but involves the subject in a kind of commitment, a personal involvement, because meaning is intrinsic to who one is. If meaning is an intrinsic component of consciousness, value fundamentally orients meaning. That our conscious intentionality deliberates about questions of value implicitly raises the question of who we are. The way we respond to this question, in both the operating of our consciousness and the answers we attain, reveals ourselves as

54 Lonergan, Method, 30-31.

55 For a helpful discussion of the influence of Max Scheler and Deitrich von Hildebrand on Lonergan’s thought, see Doorley, Heart, 17-41. I will explore this influence extensively in my chapter on feelings.

56 Lonergan, Method, 31-33. See also Doorley, Heart, 52-61.

57 Lonergan, Method, 34. A heuristic definition gives a way of figuring out what is meant without proposing a direct definition.
moral agents. If genuineness in self-transcendence is to be a human achievement, the human subject requires both wisdom and authenticity in relation to questions of value.

Our conscious intentionality, according to Lonergan, both operates within and defines a horizon. In this regard, what we know and what we care about defines our horizons. We know at least something about and have at least some concern concerning whatever is within our horizon, while what is outside our horizon does not exist for us as an object of knowledge or concern.

Even though the chief discussion of horizon occurs in chapter three, note here that for Lonergan feelings and values constitute major determinants of the horizon of human subjectivity. While questions of truth are of major importance for one’s horizon, questions of value seek and define the real self-transcendence constitutive of one’s horizon. Through asking questions about truth and value, we confront the question of whether we, ourselves, are true and good.

Transcendental Method

Lonergan’s long-term concern was to provide a method for theology on the level of our times, not just to examine consciousness in an empirically based way. By “method” Lonergan did not mean a series of steps or a technique to be practiced

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60 See Doorley, Heart, 87-88.


mechanically, guaranteeing results irrespective of the virtue or talent of the practitioner.\textsuperscript{63}

In this respect, his thought was far from the fallacies practiced under much of the modernist quest for method.\textsuperscript{64} As Lonergan states at the beginning of \textit{Method in Theology}:\textsuperscript{65}

A method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results. There is a method, then, where there are distinct operations, where each operation is related to the others, where the set of relations forms a pattern, where the pattern is described as the right way of doing the job, where operations in accord with the pattern may be repeated indefinitely, and where the fruits of such repetition are, not repetitious, but cumulative and progressive.

Method, then, involves groups of operations (actions and activities) that have some intrinsic relation to each other and that produce a set of results. To qualify as a method in Lonergan’s terms these related operations must be versatile and constructive; that is, the method must be able to be applied to a number of different situations and produce results that can cohere together in a way that can produce advance.

Lonergan lists twelve specific goals for his transcendental method in the first chapter of \textit{Method in Theology}, while also explaining that transcendental method is only part of theological method.\textsuperscript{66} Working through the whole of transcendental method and theological method is far beyond what I can attempt here, but I discuss several aspects of each that are important for the present study.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{63} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 5-6.

\textsuperscript{64} For the magisterial critique of the modernist quest for method, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, \textit{Truth and Method}, 2nd ed., ed. and tr. by J. Weinsheimer and D. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1998). Lonergan refers and alludes to this work (in the German) at least a dozen times in \textit{Method in Theology}.

\textsuperscript{65} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 4.

\textsuperscript{66} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 20-25.
\end{flushleft}
Empirical Basis in Cognitional Theory

As stated above, Lonergan’s method is based on empirical procedures of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, the structured and recurrent operations of consciousness. He indicates this basis quite clearly:67

All special methods consist in making specific the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible. But before they are ever formulated in concepts and expressed in words, those precepts have a prior existence and reality in the spontaneous, structured dynamism of human consciousness.

Moving from the spontaneous, yet often vague and confused, functioning of the transcendentals as guiding one’s conscious operations involves a “heightening of consciousness” in which the human subject better comes to know himself.68 The way this heightening of consciousness works is what Lonergan described as “applying the operations as intentional to the operations as conscious.”69 The operations of consciousness (experiencing, understanding, judging, living responsibly) occur naturally and regularly in any normal adult human being. The heightening of consciousness involves the human subject’s applying these operations of consciousness to themselves: 1) paying attention to the fact that certain operations occur in one’s conscious life—that he at least sometimes pays attention to various things, tries to understand them, assesses which understandings are certainly or probably true, and makes choices and tries to live responsibly on the basis of those judgments of fact and value; 2) coming to understand that the operations of one’s consciousness in knowing and deliberating are adequately

68 Lonergan, Method, 14, 20.
69 Lonergan, Method, 14.
described by the above set of operations in a more-or-less comprehensive way, that they are a repetitive and related set of operations, and that they may constitute knowing the true and choosing that which is of value; 3) judging that the state of affairs described in #2 actually is the case; and 4) making responsible choices on the basis of the understanding now judged to be true, choices that would include reassessing one’s previous philosophical commitments and refashioning them on the newly-discovered more adequate basis.

At this point, I may return to the initial question, “What is one doing when one is knowing?” This question, which Lonergan’s transcendental method seeks to answer, is at base the question of correct cognitional theory. How does the human mind function in cognition? It functions in a recurrent and related pattern of experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. This answer is empirically grounded. Any reader is invited not just to take the proposed answer on authority but rather to discover and verify this set of operations in herself.70

From Cognitional Theory to Epistemology

But, Lonergan’s transcendental method is about much more than cognitional theory, because the question of what one is doing when one is knowing raises the question: Why does that particular set of operations constitute knowing? This question moves one from cognitional theory to epistemology. Similarly, once the question of epistemology has received an answer, there arises the further question: What does one know when one knows? In this way, the basic question of cognitional theory enables the

70 Lonergan, Method, 24.
solution to the issue of epistemology and grounds the coherent response to the question of metaphysics.\(^{71}\)

Lonergan cognitional theory makes possible an answer to the question of epistemology that critically meets the question of objectivity, because the correct understanding of objectivity in knowing true meanings does not entail getting a better and better look at the object of inquiry and reflection, or achieving some closer contact, so that the separation between the knower and the known is bridged in the world of immediacy.\(^{72}\) Rather, objectivity is obtained when one has followed the transcendental precepts (Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible) with authenticity.\(^{73}\)

In Lonergan’s view, one of the fundamental mistakes of Nietzsche and others who deny the possibility of human knowing is that they have confused the standards of objectivity appropriate for the world of immediacy with those appropriate for the world mediated by meaning.\(^{74}\) By “the world of immediacy,” Lonergan refers to the world of objects confined to the sensory impressions of extroverted consciousness. Being objective in this world means letting our senses—our seeing, hearing, tasting, touching—fulfill the task of knowing. The world of a normally functioning adult human includes the world of immediacy, in which “objects are immediate when their objects are present,” but goes beyond it to include the world mediated by meaning, in which “by imagination,

\(^{71}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 25.


\(^{73}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 262-265.

\(^{74}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 263.
language, symbols, we operate in a compound manner; immediately with respect to the image, word, symbol; mediately with respect to what is represented or signified.”75 In this world, an object is intended by questions and becomes understood, affirmed and decided upon.76 Confined to neither mere secondary qualities nor to mere ideal types, the world mediated by meaning can name the real world that human intelligence is able truly to know by asking questions and discovering correct answers.77

Objectivity with respect to the world mediated by meaning, then, is attained by searching out relevant data, by understanding possibly relevant descriptions or explanations, by critically assessing possibly relevant understandings in the light of the evidence, and responsibly conforming one’s person and life to the judgments achieved. Objectivity thus has to do with seeking the true and good thoroughly enough, and without restricting inquiry or reflection to one’s prior preferences or extrinsic influences. Knowing results when the conscious operations, governed by the transcendental precepts, function successfully.

To expect the kind of objectivity confined to the world of immediacy when dealing with a world mediated by meaning yields frustration and disappointment. By simply looking for something that cannot be attained, one will likely conclude that the whole project must fail. However, in searching for the objectivity appropriate in the world mediated by meaning, Lonergan argued, we can find genuine knowledge of the real world.

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75 Lonergan, Method, 28.

76 Lonergan, Method, 262-265.

77 See Lonergan’s section, “The Dialectic of Meaning in Metaphysics,” in Insight, 426-455.
Therefore, according to Descartes and Kant, the *sine qua non* of human knowledge is certainty. Something cannot be “knowledge” if it is possible for the “knower” to be wrong, and the knower must be able to account for this certainty immanently. In Lonergan, the fundamental note of human knowledge is humility. The modernist urge to demand immanently generated apodictic certainty reflects the reductionism of considering the world of immediacy the only real world.

**From Epistemology to Metaphysics**

The answer to the question of metaphysics that Lonergan offers is heuristic. Whereas epistemology related cognitional theory to the question of objectivity, metaphysics relates cognitional theory and epistemology to the question of being. Being, according to Lonergan, is the object of human inquiry and is found when the operations of consciousness operate correctly. This “second-order definition” starts with a notion of being directly related to true understanding and judgment. More specifically, it starts with what is empirically verifiable—the human search for true answers to questions—and uses this empirically verifiable fact to specify heuristically being as the content sought by our questions.

**An Operational Basis for Unity**

The theological method Lonergan proposes grows organically (though with considerable creativity and effort) from the application of transcendental method to the subject matter and activity of theology and theologians. With respect to theological

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method, briefly stated, Lonergan desired to provide a basis, a “rock,” upon which theologians could come to practice their craft. 79 This “rock” is not a proposition or set of propositions, however valid, but in “the quite open structure of the human spirit—in the ever immanent and operative though unexpressed transcendental precepts….80 On the basis of a correct understanding of these operations and precepts, Lonergan offered an open and dynamic model of the activity of theology and theologians in the form of eight functional specialties, which group the operations theologians constantly perform, with each carefully related to the transcendental precepts and conscious operations.81

Lonergan believed that greater unity and coherence of results could result from discovering and promoting a valid and adequate method for doing theology. He also hoped to cure theology of a number of myths and bad practices by clarifying what, exactly, theologians are doing when they are doing theology and what are its foundations.82 In the movement from the past (religious documents, historical figures, and events) into the present (current practices and doctrines) and toward the future (as yet undefined, but growing—for better or worse—out of the past and present), Lonergan intended his theological method to help theologians toward greater clarity and truth, and thereby toward more unity in theological expression.

Finally, Lonergan’s goal in this method is focused on helping his readers advert to and understand the central role of the person of the theologian in the practice of theology, hence on the presence or absence in that person of religious, moral, and intellectual

79 Lonergan, Method, 19.
80 Lonergan, Method, 302.
81 Lonergan, Method, 127-133
82 Lonergan, Method, xi-xii.
conversions. In other words, Lonergan explores whether the theologian has experienced transformation by receiving the love of God, made a commitment to find and follow the truly good irrespective of personal satisfactions, and discovered that the world mediated by meaning is the real world humans can know in truth.

From Faculty Psychology to Intentionality Analysis

Chapter one of the present work began to ask the question of how Lonergan’s early work that deployed a metaphysical faculty psychology is related to his later work as grounded in transcendental method. With this overview of the transcendental method that grounds method in theology in place, I can give a more specific answer to that question. It is not a simple question, and although I can not offer a comprehensive answer, I may be able to offer an account that will help us to understand how Lonergan’s early work can enrich an understanding of his later work.

In discussing the difficulties with Aristotle’s philosophy and the difficulties with medieval the faculty psychology that developed in the middle ages there is no concern to diminish the greatness and importance of earlier theologians and philosophers but to correct the inadequacies of their thought. Aristotle himself noted that, even in conversation with a philosopher very dear to one, one’s first friendship is owed to truth.

As I will show, Lonergan’s transcendental method incorporates the genuine achievements of Aristotle and Aquinas into a more comprehensive horizon. To help

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83 Lonergan, *Method*, 237-244. The relation of religious and moral conversion is the question of this work. The conversions will be discussed directly in chapter six, while the question of their relation will be the topic of chapters seven and eight.

explain Lonergan’s achievement, I would like to start from the basic discussion of the soul in Aristotle and examine how Aristotle understood human existence.

Aristotle’s Psychology

Especially in *On the Soul* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle develops a notion of the soul as “substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it.” For Aristotle the soul is the specific intelligibility of being alive, or what it means for a given living being to be alive. This soul can have faculties, passions and states.

The faculties of the soul indicate its function of doing something or ability to do something. It can either grow and receive nutrition (a vegetative or nutritive soul), locomote and perceive (a sensitive soul), or reason (a rational soul). A lower type of soul (say, that of an oak tree) would possess only the nutritive soul, while a higher type of soul (say, that of a wolf) would additionally possess a sensitive soul. A human soul would possess all three types.

The passions (*pathē* or emotions) of the soul indicate states of mind such as anger, fear, calmness, friendship and enmity. They are “all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure.”

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86 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.5.


discusses it, pathē in the soul can include not just the passion itself but also, intrinsically, the reason why it exists in the soul.\footnote{Aristotle, \textit{Rhetoric} 2.1-11.}

States of the soul are persistent ways of being.\footnote{Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 2.1-2.} A state is the regular actuation of form in matter. Thus, the states that are possible for the soul are those that are included in its imminent intelligibility; the states that do exist in the soul cohere with what it actually, repeatedly, does. Thus, a wolf does not have the capacity of being wise or unwise. A human being, however, becomes wise or is shown to be unwise according to what she actually does.

The excellences Aristotle discovers in the human soul are neither passions nor faculties but states. He analyzes the excellences of the human soul in terms of virtues—habits of knowing the true or willing the good that become second nature in the way the soul makes real the potential of its nature.\footnote{See Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 2.5-6.} Thus a man or woman may possess intelligence, wisdom or science, practical wisdom, justice, fortitude or temperance as states of his soul.\footnote{See Paula Gottleib, “Aristotle on Dividing the Soul and Uniting the Virtues,” \textit{Phronesis} 39 (November 1994): 275-290.} These virtues Aristotle deduced to be habits—a kind of governing intermediary between the soul’s potency (potential) and its actuation (achieved reality) that regulates the actuation of potency.

After the rediscovery of Aristotle’s metaphysical and ethical writings in the high Middle Ages, the careful analysis he provided became the standard tools of the academic trade. For example, in Aquinas’ discussion of justice in the \textit{Summa Theologiae} (II-II...
58.2), he asks, “Whether justice is fittingly defined as being the perpetual and constant will to render to each one his right?” He answers that, “The aforesaid definition of justice is fitting if understood aright. For, since every virtue is a habit that is the principle of a good act, a virtue must needs be defined by means of the good act bearing on the matter proper to that virtue.” While he did not agree with Aristotle in every particular and in many ways went beyond him, Aquinas used the conceptual tools and language of Aristotle’s psychology.

Contingency

The systematic structure used by the medieval authors came, by and large, from the re-discovered writings of Aristotle. Aristotle represented true achievement of the human spirit, but, according to Lonergan, he did have limitations, and some of which have now been superseded. As Lonergan says, “Magnificently he [Aristotle]...”

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93 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II 58.1. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in English from the *Summa Theologica* are taken from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981). Hereafter, the standard notation for the *Summa* will be used.

94 Aristotle was by no means the only (or even the main) source of Aquinas’ ethics. For an interesting analysis of Aquinas’ ethical sources, see Servais-Théodore Pinckaers, “The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas,” trans. by Mary Thomas Noble, in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. by Stephen Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 17-29. However, resplendent throughout Aquinas’ writings are Aristotle’s distinctions and terms. For discussions of many aspects of Aquinas’ adopting and adapting of Aristotle’s teaching on the soul, see Kevin White, “The Passions of the Soul,” in *Ethics of Aquinas*, 103-115; also see Bonnie Kent, “Habits and Virtues,” in *Ethics of Aquinas*, 116-130, and Gregory Reichburg, “The Intellectual Virtues,” in *Ethics of Aquinas*, 131-150.


96 Lonergan, *Method*, 310-311. As George Lewis puts it, “It is difficult to speak of Aristotle without exaggeration: he is felt to be so mighty, and is known to be so wrong. History, surveying the whole scope of his pretensions, gazes on him in wonder.” George Lewis, *Aristotle: A Chapter from the
represented an early stage of human development—the emergence of systematic
meaning. But he did not anticipate the later emergence of a method that envisaged an
ongoing succession of systems.”97 Aristotle did not anticipate the emergence of a way of
thinking in which his metaphysics, categories, ethics and culture were relative
components grounded in a method based on the open but structured dynamism of the
human spirit.98

In Lonergan’s analysis, in Aristotle’s view of science as dealing only with
necessary truths was a second, related, problem.99 Aristotle’s science seeks true and
certain knowledge of things by their universal and necessary causes, so that in celestial
physics necessity excluded all contingency.100 For Aristotle being was divided into the
necessary, which was known in science (epistēmē) and known comprehensively in
wisdom (sophia), and the contingent, where things could always be otherwise, and so
scientific knowledge was impossible, and only technique (technē) or practical wisdom
(phronēsis) can be exercised with benefit.101 This emphasis on absolute necessity—what

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98 For the relation of the classicist view of culture, in which culture is a permanent achievement,
and the historical view of culture in which cultures form an ongoing dynamism, see Bernard Lonergan,
“The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical-Mindedness,” in *Second Collection*, 1-9; see

99 “We think we understand a thing simpliciter (and not in the sophistic fashion accidentally)
whenever we think we are aware both that the explanation because of which the object is is its explanation,
and that it is not possible for this to be otherwise. It is clear, then, that to understand is something of this
sort; for both those who do not understand and those who do understand –the former think they are
themselves in such a state, and those who understand actually are. Hence, that of which there is
understanding simpliciter cannot be otherwise.” Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 1.2.


101 “That wisdom is a science of first principles, is evident from the introductory chapters ….”
has to be this way and cannot be otherwise—tended to devalue anything that could not live up to this measure.

Medieval theology, especially in its later stages, took very seriously this connection between science (or, real knowledge) and necessity. The predictable result was a burst of skepticism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as theologians and philosophers tried to corral human knowledge and being into a stockade that only admitted necessity. Aristotle’s logical ideal of science, which only admitted necessity, has been superseded in both modern physics and mathematics. Theology scarcely ranks as one of the modern sciences, but if it is to be successful in matching through generalized empirical method based on the functioning of human consciousness the methodical control (as distinct from merely logical control) of these sciences, theology will need to a notion of science and scholarship that can account for contingency. Lonergan’s theological method aimed to do just that.

Scientific and Ordinary Language

Lonergan also considered Aristotle in some cases blurs the difference between the description proper to common names for things used by undifferentiated consciousness (which relates things to ourselves—what medieval theology described as priora quoad nos, or first for us) and the explanation proper to scientific—theoretical—terms (which relates things to each other—what medieval theology described as priora quoad se, or


103 Lonergan, Method, 278-281.

104 See the first five chapters of Insight for Lonergan’s working-through of these advances and the philosophical fruits to be gleaned from them.
first in itself) developed by the theoretically differentiated consciousness. Aristotle’s difficulty here is largely attributable to following the normal usages of grammar that produce Aristotle’s ten predicaments or categories (substance, quality, quantity, etc.); clearly, to be the pioneer of systematic meaning is not necessarily to be its perfector. It remains that some of the Aristotelian ambiguities carried over into medieval theology with dubious effect, as evidenced, for example, in the variety and ambiguity of the uses of action, potency, motion and passion that Lonergan discusses in *Verbum*, chapter three, where a wealth of technical precision is brought to bear on Aristotelian and medieval usage. Aristotle’s merely logical control over meaning had not yet reached full explanatory status, which affected medieval faculty psychology.

For Lonergan, this blurring contributed to the “verbalism” of late medieval theology and philosophy, which deployed Aristotelian systematic, theoretical, thought to understand the world. Aristotle’s verbal ambiguity, along with certain metaphysical presuppositions of science and human culture, contributed to difficulties his fourteenth and fifteenth century students never successfully resolved.

**Cosmology**

Aquinas, and many theologians who followed him, accepted Aristotle’s view of an unmoved mover serving as the source of motion of a necessary series of heavenly

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spheres, the motion of whose bodies influenced the actions of earthly beings.\textsuperscript{109} This cosmology, as mentioned in chapter one, affected Thomas’ theology of grace.\textsuperscript{110} A cosmology based on celestial spheres is mistaken, and the theology and philosophy influenced by it must be corrected, while remaining faithful to the original genuine insights. Lonergan’s move to transcendental method yields a methodical control to theological operations.

History

The great edifice of meaning constituted by high medieval theology had the purpose of reconciling truths disclosed, at different times and in different ways, by the Christian tradition with other scientific and theological traditions such as Aristotle and Plato.\textsuperscript{111} Abelard’s clever \textit{Sic et Non} demonstrated the need for such a work of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{112} Although theologians who followed him set about this task with vigor, in Lonergan’s view,

The Scholastic aim of reconciling all the elements in its Christian inheritance had one grave defect. It was content with a logically and metaphysically satisfying reconciliation. It did not realize how much of the multiplicity in the inheritance constituted not a logical or metaphysical problem but basically a historical problem.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{109} Concerning the reception of Aristotle’s science in the universities of the Middle Ages, see Edward Grant, \textit{The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages: Their Religious, Institutional and Intellectual Contexts} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18-32.

\textsuperscript{110} See, for example, ST I 115.3-6. See also Lonergan, \textit{Verbum}, 75-79.

\textsuperscript{111} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 279.

\textsuperscript{112} This provoking work set forth a number of propositions and used the various authorities respected by the scholars of his day both to prove and disprove each one.

\textsuperscript{113} Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 279-280.
The great Scholastic work neglected the historical nature of human knowing and being, as great as their efforts were in the logical and metaphysical aspects.

When reading Aquinas’ analysis of Hebrew’s 11:1, for example, one encounters the question whether the Apostle (Hebrews was taken to be Pauline) rightly used the word “substance” in declaring faith the substance of things hoped for. Aquinas, not surprisingly, decides that the Apostle’s usage was correct and defends it more or less as if Paul slipped an Aristotelian technical term into a letter to the Churches. The solution, as brilliant as it is, takes the form of a metaphysical or terminological riddle, not the form of noting a Hellenistic rabbi happening to use a term that Aristotle had made much of in a quite different historical and intellectual context.

The Aristotelian view of science described above leads to this a-historical manner of dealing with human meaning, because it deems real knowledge to be of the unchanging, necessary, and eternal. While the orthodox medieval theologians were not simply shackled to Aristotle, this static view of the relation of knowledge and substance and contingency proved difficult for them to redress, especially in the wake of Duns

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114 ST II-II 4.1.

115 As Frederick Lawrence notes, Aquinas was aware of this difficulty. The analogies employed by theologians in explaining the doctrines they believe by authority provide only fitting explanations, not certain proofs. Therefore, Aquinas would expect his explanation of Hebrews to be a systematic reflection on what had earlier been an occasional (particular) problem. Additionally, in the article here discussed, Aquinas specifically notes that Paul’s words are not arranged to form a definition; therefore, Aquinas would be aware that his systematic reflection adds something to Paul’s expression by explaining it systematically. Lonergan refers repeatedly to the way medieval theology systematically reflected on past occasional expressions. See Bernard Lonergan, “Method in Catholic Theology,” in Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964, ed. by R. Croken, F. Crowe, and R. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 43n18, for a bibliography of these references and a short discussion of Lonergan’s possible dependence on the work of Yves Congar. Lonergan briefly discusses Aquinas’ use of Aristotle for Christian teaching in Bernard Lonergan, “Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation,” in Third Collection, 47-51. Despite Aquinas’ awareness of the difficulty of his appropriation of Hebrews into a systematic context, he does not offer a solution to it that takes historical situatedness into account.
Scotus and William of Ockham (brilliant logicians who showed less awareness of this problem than had Aquinas).

Metaphysical Basis

From its first chapter, this work has worked to understand the shift from Aristotle’s (and Aquinas’) soul, with its intellect, will and habits, and Lonergan’s conscious human subject. With respect to Aristotle’s doctrine of the soul, one of the largest problems (from Lonergan’s perspective) is that Aristotle does not derive these substances and faculties from experienced correlatives but deduces these by proceeding from acts related to objects, to potencies, to dispositions in potencies called habits, to the kinds of souls.\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 340. See also Lonergan, \textit{Verbum}, 4 and 4n3.} Once these metaphysical entities are set in place, the rest of philosophy comes to be derived from them. Lonergan thought these conceptions contained limitations and led to insoluble problems and false dichotomies.\footnote{See Bernard Lonergan, “\textit{Insight}: Preface to a Discussion,” in \textit{Collection}, 142-145.}

For example, once a separate will and intellect are posited it is difficult to navigate between the Scylla of intellectualism and the Carbydis of voluntarism, no matter how strongly one objects that we are speaking about one person and that the will is a rational appetite.\footnote{See Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 340. Also see the great morass of difficulties between the Molinists and Bañezians detailed by Stebbins, \textit{Divine Initiative}, 183-211.} Also, the logical chain that leads one to posit the different souls and their faculties is a long one.\footnote{Lonergan, “\textit{Insight}: Preface to a Discussion,” 143-144; see also Lonergan, \textit{Verbum}, 4-5.} Present to us (first for us) are acts related to objects. The metaphysical entities that a metaphysically based psychology needs in order to proceed
are remote (first in itself), never directly experienced, only deducible. The more late medieval and early modern scholars examined the logical chain that leads to these deduced entities and their faculties, the more problems arose in trying to understand some such functioning and being in human beings.\textsuperscript{120}

In contrast, Lonergan argued not from a distinguishable will and intellect but from the patterned dynamics of human consciousness operating in four related but distinct phases. In contrast to the former struggle between competing faculties (intellect and will), the unity of consciousness operates in distinct but related ways:

The fourth and highest level is that of deliberation, evaluation, decision. It follows that the priority of intellect is just the priority of the first three levels of experiencing, understanding, and judging.\textsuperscript{121}

Whereas earlier philosophy had struggled either to retain the primacy of the intellect over against the priority of the will, or to retain the freedom of the will over against the priority of the intellect, transcendental method thematizes organically show the related, yet distinct operations and levels of consciousness.

Second, pure reason, or the speculative intellect, is disclosed as an abstraction.\textsuperscript{122} For Lonergan, so-called “pure reason” is simply interpreted in relation to the actual functioning of the cognitive operations of rational self-consciousness. As with discussions of pure (human) nature, it is no more than a limit-concept.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{120} This drive reached its boiling-over point in the incomplete synthesis of Kant’s \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, in which he analyzed a divide of un-knowability between really-real-reality (the nouminal) and the world of appearances (the phenomenal) knowable to pure reason. Immanuel Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, tr. by N. Smith, unabridged ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965), 257-275.

\textsuperscript{121} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 340.

\textsuperscript{122} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 340.

\textsuperscript{123} See Stebbins, \textit{Divine Initiative}, 178-182, for an analysis of Lonergan’s stance in the “pure nature” debates.
The living functioning of human consciousness has little pure about it as it deals with the universe of being according to different patterns of experience and differentiations of consciousness. As for voluntarism and intellectualism, the division between pure reason and practical reason is based on outmoded propositions framing the debate that are not grounded in the empirical functioning of human consciousness.

Third, Lonergan’s intentionality analysis opens theology to a knowledge born of religious love. A deduced metaphysical conception of the human soul with its intellect and will, renders the love of something that is not first known inconceivable. For, the will in its deliberations can only choose among those options presented to it by the intellect. When considering the dynamic flow of human consciousness on four distinct levels, one may consider that each of the four levels has a priority of its own. The grace of being in love with God makes it possible to have intentional responses to the value of toward transcendent mystery beyond the horizon of merely human knowing and choosing. This response of the heart is integral to what Lonergan terms religious conversion, to be discussed in chapter six.

Verifiability

The thrust of the shift to intentionality analysis, however, goes beyond any of the above conclusions that transcendental method helps one to draw inasmuch as the

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124 For a helpful comparison of Lonergan’s analysis of human interiority with the theoretical framework of Maréchal, see Michael Vertin, “Maréchal, Lonergan, and the Phenomenology of Knowing,” in Creativity and Method, 411-422.

125 Lonergan, Method, 340.

126 ST I 60.1.

127 Lonergan, Method, 340-341.
rightness of the method itself is verifiable. Even if faculty psychology had come to all
the above conclusions in its own terms, it would still have been based on an
experientially inaccessible metaphysical deduction rather than historically verifiable
structures of the conscious subject. As Lonergan stated in the (new) “Introduction” to
*Verbum*:

> No one will complain that Aristotle did not employ introspective
techniques in his study of plant life. But one could well complain if a
method suitable for the study of plants were alone employed in the study
of human sensitivity and human intelligence. … If vegetative acts are not
accessible to introspection, sensitive and intellectual acts are among the
immediate data of consciousness; they can be reached not only by
deduction from their objects but also in themselves as given in
consciousness.128

Transcendental method, verifiable in the subject’s own conscious interiority, is a
generalized empirical method capable of dealing with human historicity in its complex
unity.129

Perhaps most of note, in that the basic terms of transcendental method are
psychological (empirically discovered within human consciousness as experience), not
metaphysical, transcendental method is capable of grounding a critical metaphysics.130 A
metaphysics that serves as its own starting evades a critical and methodical control.
Conscious intentionality is available to every normally functioning human being. The
analysis of it is verifiable and can thereby serve to critically control meanings in
connected fields. Therefore, Lonergan’s transcendental method offers significant
advantages over faculty psychology.

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In specifying the performative meaning of both authenticity and unauthenticity in terms of the transcendental precepts, transcendental method is more capable of dealing with the human traditions in which the subject operates, and, in general, with the developing and changing nature of the human subject than static faculty psychology. Transcendental method embraces the person of the knower as well as the reality known. As the quotation from *Verbum* above continues,

> Finally, when conscious acts are studied by introspection, one discovers not only the acts and their intentional terms but also the intending subject, and there arises the problem of the relation of subject to soul, of the Augustinian *mens* or *animus* to the Aristotelian *anima*.

Who am I? Lonergan’s transcendental method offers a critical way of helping understand the subject considering and the subject considered.

**Wisdom**

Finally, Lonergan’s transcendental method also offers significant advantages in relation to systematic meaning. The systematic meaning of Aristotle’s and of medieval faculty psychology, though amazingly accurate in many respects, was hobbled by the Aristotelian notion of science, so that the *sophia* of the philosopher, in contrast to the *phronēsis* of the man of practical wisdom, could never have direct application to the world of contingency where humans actually live. However genuine and amazing the emergence of systematic meaning was, it was not directly relevant to the world of human living.

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132 Lonergan, *Verbum*, 5
133 Aristotle himself realized that his views could encounter this dilemma. During his discussion of practical wisdom he remarks, “Difficulties might be raised as to the utility of these qualities of mind.”
Lonergan’s transcendental method eliminates these contrasts between wisdom and practical wisdom, necessity and contingency, by thematizing differentiations of consciousness—one of which, the theoretical, corresponds closely to Aristotle’s systematic meaning—in the context the particular common sense of any given time and place.\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 260-261. For a more detailed discussion of common sense, see chapter five of this work in the discussion on bias.} Theory enriches the commonsense understanding of any pertinent subject matter. Systematic meaning can thus be applied to the whole of the universe of being.

The Question of God

If Lonergan had very good reasons to make the monumental move from the world-and-language framework of medieval faculty psychology to the new foundation in transcendental method, what does this transition actually look like? How does the transposition from the past framework and its insights work in practice? To respond to the question more concretely, I will briefly consider the question of God.

In the \textit{Summa Theologiae}, after discussing the theologians’ task of speaking of God, Aquinas proceeds through a series of questions which treat God as the sum or measure of all perfections.\footnote{See the first twenty-six questions of the \textit{Prima Pars}.} Aquinas develops an understanding of God’s existence and essence, of the divine operations, including God’s names, knowledge, will, power, and beatitude. As regards the divine essence, Thomas explains the meaning of God as

\begin{quote}
For wisdom will contemplate none of the things that will make a man happy (for it is not concerned with any coming into being), and though practical wisdom has \textit{this} merit, for what purpose do we need it?\textquoteleft\textquoteright Aristotel, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 6.12. Aristotle thought he adequately answered this concern. Lonergan is less optimistic.
\end{quote}
simple, perfect, infinite, immutable, and one. As for the divine attributes, Thomas
discusses God’s knowledge, life and will.

In ST I 20.1, to the question whether love exists in God, Aquinas’ answers as
follows:

*I answer that*, We must needs assert that in God there is love: because love
is the first movement of the will and of every appetitive faculty. For, since
the acts of the will and of every appetitive faculty tend towards good and
evil, as to their proper objects: and since good is essentially and especially
the object of the will and the appetite, whereas evil is only the object
secondarily and indirectly as opposed to good; it follows that the acts of
the will and appetite that regard good must naturally be prior to those that
regard evil; thus, for instance, joy is prior to sorrow, love to hate: because
what exists of itself is always prior to that which exists through another.136

Having shown that love must be prior to everything else in the will, Aquinas concludes
that God, who is first of all, must have love supremely. Having established that love is
one of God’s attributes, Aquinas has explained another important aspect of his extended
theology of God.

In response to the question of God in his later works, Lonergan states in *Method
in Theology*:

I have conceived being in love with God as an ultimate fulfillment of
man’s capacity for self-transcendence; and this view of religion is
sustained when God is conceived as the supreme fulfillment of the
transcendental notions, as supreme intelligence, truth, reality,
righteousness, goodness. … On the other hand, the love of God is also
penetrated with awe. God’s thoughts and God’s ways are very different
from man’s and by that difference God is terrifying.137

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136 ST I 20.1

Lonergan never equates God’s being with the results of human cognition. However, the first step to knowing God and the love of God is first of all awareness of the gift of God’s love in ourselves. The divine perfections we conceive are the supreme goal desired by the ongoing dynamism of human consciousness, namely the fulfillment of the transcendental notions.

If Aquinas’ definition is the fruit of a profound insight, what is advantage of moving beyond it? First, by grounding metaphysical terms in empirically verifiable cognitional theory, the rightness of those terms is critically defended. Second, Lonergan’s conception of God is directly correlated with the nature of the lover and knower in terms of one’s own capacity for self-transcendence. Third, despite at first glance appearing to be an anthropocentric conception of God’s being, the love that grounds and perfects the seeking human subject is the gift of God.

Lonergan’s conception of God does not reject Aquinas. God is still defined (analogously) by known perfections. The perfections defined and defended by Aquinas in the Summa all find a home in Lonergan’s theology of God, but they will have received a different, critical, grounding in relation to the verifiable pattern of conscious human operations. And so, the love of God that for Aquinas constitutes the perfection of the divine will becomes the supreme fulfillment of the transcendental precepts that are to drive our conscious intentionality toward self-transcendence.

138 Because Lonergan specifies that our operations of consciousness point toward God in their intention, and do not achieve God in their performance, Lonergan’s theological method is not guilty of what Heidegger and those influenced by him would term onto-theology. For a discussion of how positive Christian theology can work under this rubric, see Merold Westphal, Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 21 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

139 Lonergan, Method, 241-243
Piaget and Habit

A chapter hoping to demonstrate how Lonergan’s theological method can successfully incorporate the valid insights of faculty psychology would not be complete without a consideration of habit. “Habit” was one of the most important conceptual tools available to the medieval theologians. Aquinas explained the human virtues of the mind and will (such as wisdom and justice), the theological virtues leading to salvation (faith, hope and love), and many roots of vice and sin (for example, concupiscence) all in terms of habits. The use of habits as explanatory categories goes back to Aristotle.

Aristotle and Aquinas on Habit

The concept of habit is a deduction that solves a problem. We humans have some fairly common abilities to do things, yet we act in such different ways. And, it seems that many of our differing actions are not random but patterned in certain ways and quite persistent over time. For example, any normally functioning adult human being has the ability to act either fairly or unfairly. But, one person might be a paragon of virtue who regularly acts in a way that gives to everyone her due, while another person regularly cheats and steals. Why? Given the same set of circumstances, why does Jane regularly play fair while Sally takes every advantage with barely a wink or a nod?

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140 One can see a whole treatise on the habits in ST I-II 49-89.
141 See ST I-II 50, 61, 62, and 77.
142 See, for example, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.1.
Aristotle and Aquinas argue that Jane and Sally both have the same human nature. Both have the same underlying abilities to act either fairly or unfairly. But the behavior each woman produces (the actual product of that underlying ability, the point where the underlying potential becomes actual occurrence) operates differently. And, these patterns of behavior persist; they usually change slowly, if at all, and can be reversed in exceptional situations only after reflection and conscious choice.

Aristotle and the medieval theologians sought a cause for these differences, some patterning intermediary between actual human performances and the bare ability or potentiality to do something.143 Thus, a just woman will regularly act in a just way because she has developed the controlling disposition of the potentiality (faculty) toward justice that shapes her human nature as a kind of second nature. This is habit, which forms her actuations of potency to act in a just way.144 As mentioned in chapter one, Aristotle argued that we form habits by practicing them.145

143 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.1, and ST I-II 49

144 To take a less morally charged example, consider the case of language. When I speak, I normally speak in English. My friend Pavel, on the other hand, can speak English but more naturally speaks Czech. Under medieval analysis we both share the same potency (underlying potential) because we both have (are) human souls; and, normally functioning adult human souls have the potential of speech. In the same situations, however, the actual performance of our language is quite diverse. He says, “Dobrý den;” I say, “Hello.” Faculty psychology would argue that I actuate the potential of my nature by speaking English because I have developed the habit of speaking English. It has become second-nature for me, natural and spontaneous. Pavel has a fully formed habit of speaking Czech and a less-fully formed habit of speaking English. Therefore most naturally he speaks Czech but can speak with me (quite well) in English. The habit, in this framework, is a kind of operator that goes between the basic underlying potential a person has and (when fully developed) makes it regular and common for a person to act or think in a certain way.

Lonergan and Piaget on Habit

Like the concept of faculty psychology discussed above, that of habit has a number of difficulties. First, it is a deduction, not something that is experientially accessible and so empirically derived. Second, habit is part of the metaphysical system of Aristotle’s *De Anima*, which also deduces the human soul, grounded in potencies grounded in turn in acts in relation to kinds of objects.

Lonergan still retained, however, the problem faced by Aristotle and the medievals that had led to the positing of habit. How to explain the varying regularity of human conscious operations and actions? Some intelligibility that addresses this situation, empirically derived and of greater explanatory power, is needed. Lonergan found such intelligibility using the psychological writings of Jean Piaget.

Lonergan read extensively in Piaget’s writings while preparing *Method in Theology*, and he shared some of his findings in the lectures later published as *Topics in Education*.146 In these lectures, Lonergan summarized Piaget’s psychology of the development of intelligence in childhood, specifically his theory of assimilation and adjustment.147 A section on Piaget appears near the beginning of *Method in Theology* in relation to Lonergan’s own method; Lonergan claims there the relevance of Piaget’s

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146 As mentioned in Lonergan, “Interview,” 222. The lectures that became *Topics in Education* were delivered at Xavier University in 1959. In the section in *Topics in Education* entitled “Piaget and the Idea of a General Education,” Lonergan cites sixteen of Piaget’s works. Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 193-207.

insights far beyond the field of educational psychology.\textsuperscript{148} Lonergan used Piaget’s psychology to rethink the idea of “habit,” especially Piaget’s findings on grouping operations.

Piaget rejected methods of understanding human psychology based on “preexisting logical structures.”\textsuperscript{149} His theories of childhood development were based on years of concretely observing children, including extensive observation and studies of his own three children.\textsuperscript{150} This empirical basis rooted what Piaget termed his genetic epistemology.

In his studies, Piaget faced the issue of how to account for regular patterns of conscious operations, for example, the growth in ability to interact with concrete objects (distinguishing the properties of flowers, pieces of clay, etc.) and with abstract objects (understanding time, presence versus absence, moral choices, etc.) in developing children. Especially, he wanted to explain how whole groups of advances in operational ability seemed to happen almost all at once. Piaget distinguished four stages of child development: 1) the sensorimotor period from zero to two years of age; 2) the preoperational thought period from two to seven years of age; 3) the concrete operational period from seven to eleven years of age; and 4) the propositional or formal operational stage from eleven to twelve or fourteen to fifteen years of age.\textsuperscript{151} Each of these stages is differentiated by distinct sets of operations (for example, verbal and symbolic interaction and play in the second stage) that emerge and develop in that particular stage of growth.

\textsuperscript{148} Lonergan, Method in Theology, 27-29.

\textsuperscript{149} Jean Piaget, “Intellectual Operations and Their Development,” in Essential Piaget, 352.

\textsuperscript{150} Pulaski, Understanding Piaget, 3-6.

\textsuperscript{151} Jean Piaget, “Logic and Psychology,” in Essential Piaget, 457-463.
After the empirical establishment of the different stages, there remained the question concerning how to explain these coordinated sets of operations. Piaget scholar Michael Chapman describes the key insight this way:

The decisive step was taken when Piaget asked himself whether or not the organization of concrete operations could be described in terms of mathematical groups, as the infant’s understanding of space had been described in terms of groups of displacements in *The construction of reality in the child.*

Piaget postulated that people are born with the potential for (innately possess) a “logic of coordinations of actions” that underlay the sets of operations his empirical research had verified. To understand this logic, he turned to mathematical group theory.

For Piaget, this logic is “underlying language and at a level far below conscious reflection.” After drawing the basic implication for the ontology of operations that the notion of operation is thus “psychologically natural,” he goes on to conceive his findings in terms of group theory:

The second fundamental characteristic of operations, which follows directly from the first, is that they are always structured in integrated systems. Here again, genetic analysis has produced unexpected results in that (1) the large structures described in general algebra (groups and lattices, with their derivatives) are led up to, from the time of concrete operations (which provide a bridge between coordinations of actions and formalizations of thought), by much more elementary structures. … (2) The transition from these concrete structures is made possible by a group of four transformations. There are many manifestations of these at the preadolescent levels yet the part they play in adult thought had escaped logicians.

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Note two items of interest. First, despite the talk about an “underlying logic,” rather than positing a hidden operator that makes consciousness work, Piaget claims on the basis of his experiments that human consciousness innately and spontaneously operates in an organized (intelligent) way. Piaget accounted for this innate ability in biological terms as a kind of ability to relate and form relations occasioned by human development; rather than being a deducible sub-structure of human consciousness, it has a source that is evolutionary and neurological.156 Second, Piaget discovered that organization is built up through sets of operations whose intelligibility may be expressed according to the mathematics of set or group theory (as a group of four transformations).157 The four transformations that characterize the concrete operational stage are combinativity (or composition), associativity, identity and reversibility.158

According to Piaget, the growth of cognitive operations occurs by means of internalizing actions, so that repeated actions, which a child at a certain stage of development internalizes in a psychologically real way in sets of operations, are distinguished by the four kinds of group transformations.159 The internalization of these actions as sets of operations is possible because of an innate logic of coordinated actions,


159 Chapman, *Constructive Evolution*, 131.
which, again, refers not to some metaphysical operator, but simply to the human ability to become intelligent.160

Lonergan was familiar with group theory, but neither Aristotle nor his medieval interpreters were.161 And so, he could grasp how Piaget put this mathematical advance to powerful use and apply it to his own notion of skills in Method in Theology.162

Skills

Lonergan applied Piaget’s insights that pertained mainly to the development of intelligence in children on a much wider scale. “Skills,” in chapter two of Method refer to any specialized development of human activity, either individually or corporately, due to a cumulative and patterned advance in human intelligence.163 He speaks of personal and intellectual skills, both in the world of immediacy and in the world mediated by meaning, such as a baby boy’s mastering the art of feeding himself or a woman’s mastering the art of woodworking. This personal development of skills can extend from a toddler’s achievement of personal hygiene to a scholar or artist’s mastery of the world of meaning mediated by language, symbol, and imagination. In fact, for Lonergan the differentiations of consciousness mentioned above (religious, artistic, theoretical, scholarly, and interior) fall under the rubric of skills. One should note that the skills

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160 See also H. Gruber and J. Vonèche, “Introductory Notes” to Piaget, “Intellectual Operations and Their Developments,” 342-346, for a helpful explanation of this understanding.

161 As he shows in Lonergan, Insight, 42.

162 Lonergan, Method, 27.

163 Lonergan, Method, 27-34.
Lonergan here explains are not entirely post-linguistic; some of the skills underlay the ability of language to develop in a subject and in a culture.

At a corporate level, “skills” mark the development of meaning that differentiates primitive cultures (dominated by myth and magic) from more highly developed cultures that deploy more scientific and philosophical controls over meaning. For Lonergan, a most crucial distinction is between classically skilled controls of meaning, where controls of meaning are fixed for all time, and culture is a permanent achievement, and the skills associated with modern controls of meaning, in which the controls of meaning themselves are part of ongoing process, and therefore need transcendental method to orient them responsibly.¹⁶⁴

Lonergan uses Piaget’s insights to sublate faculty psychology’s concept of habit. Lonergan’s appropriation of habit in terms of skills is more wide-ranging the medieval conception of habit. The pattern of accommodation and assimilation in the attainment of skills becomes a component in Lonergan’s structure of the concrete good of order within the transcultural heuristic of the human good, which organizes the results of all the human acts of apprehension and choice in any historical society or culture. I will elaborate Lonergan’s notion, the human good, further in chapter three.

The medievals and Aristotle needed the concept of habit because classical logic does not possess logical operations that directly account for coordination in a set of objects or operators. Therefore, when dealing with such things as clearly coordinated

sets of actions, they had to posit intermediate realities in order to account for this coordination. With the development of modern mathematics, starting with Descartes and Bernoulli’s calculus, new logical operations were defined. Group theory is a set of logical relations that accounts for organization within a group according to its inherent logic of operations. Because Piaget had access to this advance in logic, he could apply these insights to human behavior, and Lonergan could appropriate them to explain what Aquinas had to explain using an intermediary term (habit). As Piaget argues and Lonergan develops, human consciousness does not just produce the logical understandings and judgments of group theory; it is itself partially structured according to that logic. Lonergan, then, by the notion of skills, is able to incorporate the achievement of Aquinas, relative to habits, in a way that proceeds from what is empirically verifiable.

In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan develops this transition, the idea of habit, within the conceptual framework of horizon:

> Horizons, finally, are the structured resultant of past achievement and, as well, both the condition and the limitation of further development. They are structured. All learning is, not a mere addition to previous learning, but rather an organic growth out of it. So all our intentions, statements, deeds stand within contexts. … Within such contexts must be fitted each new item of knowledge and each new factor of our attitudes. What does not fit, will not be noticed or, if forced on our attention, it will seem irrelevant or unimportant. Horizons are the sweep of our interests and of our knowledge; they are the fertile source of further knowledge and care; but they are also the boundaries that limit our capacities for assimilating more than we already have attained.165

The growth of our learning, then, and the extent of our mastery in interaction with the world occur not randomly but within the structured context of adaptation and

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165 Lonergan, *Method*, 237. This passage falls outside the section on “Skills,” but language and concepts that draw on Piaget seem clear. Within the “Skills” section multiple references to adaptation exist.
assimilation. The skills that fall already within our horizon have become second nature to us, while interaction with a complex and never-completely-mastered world constantly calls us to greater self-transcendence, either horizontally, without requiring a revolution in one’s prior horizon or even a change from one horizon to another; or vertically, wherein one pivots into a new horizon. This call to change may be refused. However, we may have to undergo what Lonergan calls a vertical exercise of freedom, in which the previous bounds of our horizon are superseded, demanding that we develop insights and skills to fit a wider or even a new world.\textsuperscript{166} Parts of the subject matter for chapters three and four will be devoted to such vertical exercises of freedom.

Advantages of Lonergan/Piaget

Concluding this chapter, I summarize the ways in which Lonergan is aided by Piaget’s psychology of development. First, Piaget’s theory is empirically grounded in extended observation of young children, and so of repeatable and thorough experiment. Second, Piaget deals with development in terms of the organization of groups of conscious operations—exactly what Lonergan needs to transpose the idea of habit into a framework that is cognate with transcendental method. Third, Piaget’s developmental theory is susceptible to working out not only an account of skills, but also—in relation to combinations of combinations of groups of operations—an explanation of differentiations of consciousness. Fourth, Piaget’s theory offers an empirical basis for a logic that operates below the level of language and that can render intelligible pre-linguistic acts of meaning. Finally, those achievements are made possible because Piaget does not posit an

\textsuperscript{166} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 237-238.
operator to explain developments, but rather exploits the insights of modern mathematical set theory to explain development within the dynamics and structures of consciousness itself. However, while Piaget develops this inherent logic in biological terms as foundational to his genetic epistemology, Lonergan thematized the intelligible dynamisms of rational self-consciousness as made in the image of God.\textsuperscript{167}

Conclusion

In brief, then, Bernard Lonergan explicates transcendental method that is experientially discernable in the dynamic structures of human consciousness. Demonstrating the virtualities of generalized empirical method, Lonergan is able to retrieve the strengths of the ancient and medieval thinkers, transposing their insights formulated in terms of faculty psychology into a framework grounded in intentionality analysis and transcendental method. As a prime example of this, Lonergan transposed the medieval idea of habit by making use of the developmental psychology of Piaget.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{167} See Lonergan, \textit{Verbum}, 103-104.}
Chapter 3

The Hierarchical Ordering of the Universe

At least in his writing, Lonergan liked to make lists. Taking a glance at the table of contents of *Insight*, one quickly finds five canons of empirical method (chapter three), four complementary aspects of classical and statistical investigations (chapter four), four patterns of experience (chapter six), and four biases (chapters six and seven). Even leaving aside the twenty-six step proof in chapter nineteen, lists and sequences form a basic characteristic of Lonergan’s authorship.

It is hard to see this aspect of Lonergan’s expression as random. In James Schall’s thoughtful musings on the order of things, he observes the following concerning one person’s exhortation to another, “For God’s sake! Think!”

It is as if, in our expressions, we realize that we are not just to think but are commanded to think by what is the cause of our being, the kind of being that includes thinking. Thinking means separating this thing from that. It means identifying accurately what each thing is. It means relating this thing to that. It means seeing the order of how this thing stands to that thing.1

While Schall does not, as far as I know, cite Lonergan, this analysis could easily apply to the drive behind, the principle ordering, his writings. For Lonergan did not just seek a careful examination of this concept and that notion; rather, he sought to discover and articulate the kinds of order that permeate the whole.

This chapter seeks to explain, in a way pertinent to my main question, the ordered way in which Lonergan saw the universe. First, I will examine what Lonergan means when he names human beings incarnate acts of meaning, a discussion that will include a

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discussion of the concrete good, of “things,” with their explanatory genera and species, and the structure of the human good. Second, Lonergan’s development of horizon and sublation will be examined as important models to understand the composition and relation of meaning and meanings.

The Hierarchical Ordering of the Universe

Lonergan saw the actually existing entities that compose the universe to be meaningful entities existing relative to each other in meaningful ways. Within the universe of being proportionate to human intelligence, the greatest structuring of the good is the set of humans themselves and human society itself. On the way to understanding that meaning, though, I will in this section discuss the nature of the good itself, the way that the actual goods in this universe come into being according to probabilities, and the way that the notion of “things” helps us to see the way that existing good can be ordered.

The Concreteness of the Good

In speaking of the ordering of the universe to good, and of humans and human meaning as a part of that, Lonergan considered “what is good” always to be concrete.2 By “concrete,” Lonergan meant a reality considered in not this or that aspect but in its every aspect—the real existence of a really existing thing.3 Good has to do with being.

Especially, a real good is not an abstraction. For example, the cup of coffee I had with breakfast this morning was a concrete reality and thereby a real good (a particular

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2 Lonergan, Method, 27.

3 Lonergan, Insight, 374-375.
good, as a matter of fact). “Coffee,” in general, is one kind of abstraction, not something concrete.

Lonergan has a notion of abstraction that is both distinctive and very important. Abstraction, in common usage, can mean a disconnection from being, a production of a concept with tenuous ties to reality. Lonergan, in contrast, considered abstraction an enriching process in which the human subject, in inquiry, considered and came to understand some aspect of a thing. This enriching understanding does not stand separate from the concrete thing. In understanding a thing, we form abstractions that have possible relevance to reality; we attain and know that reality in verification and judgment. The abstraction deepens one’s appreciation for or understanding of the concrete thing.4

However, “what is good” is not the enriching abstraction but the concrete thing. The enriching nature of the abstraction results from its being the result of one or more acts of understanding. In the above example, then, “coffee,” in general, could help me to understand what links together the cup of Brazilian French Roast coffee and the cup of Kenyan AA Full City Roast coffee that I might have this afternoon. The helping understanding, that is, what is expressed or formulated in the abstraction, is not an existing thing separate from the actual cups of coffee (the particular goods); rather my understanding enriches my grasp or apprehension of these particular existing things.

In all the discussion of meaning that here follows, one must continually be aware that while the process of reflection will produce abstract concepts, “what is good” is not so. When meaning is found to be constitutive of certain realms of existence, Lonergan considered our thinking these meanings, when genuine, to involve insights into a

meaningful and ordered reality.⁵ “Meaning,” for Lonergan, is that which satisfies our wondering, what would be known when what can be known correctly has become known, either generally or in respect to some particular thing.⁶ The intelligibilities we discover and formulate in concepts are ways in which we know the meaning of the world.

Emergent Probability

At a fundamental level, Lonergan saw the potency to develop meanings, and higher sets of meanings, as intrinsic to the spatial-temporal world itself. In his discussion of space and time in *Insight*, Lonergan develops the principle of emergent probability. Space and time, as defined by Lonergan, are “ordered totalities of concrete extensions and of concrete durations.”⁷ Emergent probability is the way in which concrete possibilities become or do not become realities within these ordered totalities; the move from potency to actuality is not random but according to probabilities expressible by classical or statistical laws.⁸ As Anne Marie Dalton has put it, emergent probability is “an explanatory account of those characteristics of the universe that make a story of the universe possible at all.”⁹

According to Lonergan, the concrete intelligibility of space is that it grounds the possibility of the existence of “simultaneous multiplicities called situations.” The

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concrete intelligibility of time is that it grounds the possibility of “successive realizations” which, again, occur not randomly but according to sets of probabilities.\textsuperscript{10} Emergent probability, then, is the concrete intelligibility of space and time. It is the intelligible way that, given what is, that which follows comes to exist. Inherent, then, within the material world (the world of space and time) is the universal characteristic of developing ordered sets of meanings.

Emergent probability links classical and statistical laws together in schemes of recurrence. Classical laws, such as the laws of thermodynamics Newton formulated, say what must happen in a given situation. Understanding the universe in terms of sets of operations of classical laws, as Newton did, has a certain power. One can send astronauts to the moon and bring them back, pretending that the world operates just that way. However, the development of quantum theory demonstrates the relevance of statistical laws to understanding things that are not understandable using classical laws, for example the specification of the location of electrons—which is not directly observable—in areas of relative probability.\textsuperscript{11} Schemes of recurrence link classical and statistical laws together using probabilities. Probability is “an intelligible correlation of possibilities ordered by expected, idealized frequencies.”\textsuperscript{12} Without the determinism of classical laws, or the seeming relativity of mere statistical laws, then, schemes of recurrence indicate how, in the long run, intelligible results emerge in given situations.

\textsuperscript{10} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 195.

\textsuperscript{11} Lonergan spends considerable effort explaining developments in modern mathematics and physics in the first five chapters of \textit{Insight}.

\textsuperscript{12} Flanagan, \textit{Quest for Self-Knowledge}, 102.
For example, an acorn is an element in the universe that exists. It has an inherent intelligibility (the seed produced by an oak tree, made of plant cells organized into tissues, with the potential to become a new oak tree in time, given the right circumstances). Emergent probability, in this case, relates to the way that acorns work, in time and in relation to developing circumstances or conditions. If I were to plant the acorn in my parents’ back yard, provide it with appropriate water and fertilizer, and wait, I would set up a probability schedule in which the emergence of a new oak tree is quite likely. If I were to throw the acorn into a bonfire, however, I would enact a probability schedule in which the emergence of a new oak tree from that acorn would be close to impossible. These probability schedules express the intelligible way that the interlocking sets of intelligibilities in the universe come to constitute the universe that yet will be from the universe that was and is.

Emergent probability does not involve determinism. Statistical probabilities (as well as classical laws) are in play, and statistics do not guarantee individual future outcomes short of probabilities zero and one. Emergent probability simply recognizes that the elements of the universe have meaning. Those meanings work together successively, and in multiple situations, in ways that respect those meanings and depend on relevant schemes of conditions.

Things

As affirmed in *Insight* and reaffirmed in his later writings, Lonergan followed the Augustinian premise that the real is intelligible. That is, evil and absurdity are not
existing things but rather privations of being. Lonergan by no means ignored the reality of sin and evil; on the contrary, a great deal of his theology and philosophy addresses solutions to these besetting problems. However, evil is a parasite upon the good, and to be truly absurd (without reason) would involve not existing at all. That which is real is being, and being has inherent in it sets of intelligible relations. As with Augustine, the goodness and wisdom of God in creation provides the theological premise backing this grand view of the ordering and intelligibility of reality.

With respect to the organization of those interlocking sets of intelligibilities that constitute the universe, one can fruitfully look to Lonergan’s development in *Insight* of “things.” Lonergan puts it this way in the chapter by that name:

The notion of a thing is grounded in an insight that grasps, not relations between data, but a unity, identity, whole in data; and this unity is grasped, not by considering data from any abstractive viewpoint, but by taking them in their concrete individuality and in the totality of their aspects.

Thus, “thing” in *Insight* indicates an actuality knowable as an individuality. Relatedness to other things is not denied; in fact, it comes to be seen as intrinsic to things. Lonergan’s notion of “thing,” here, bears a genetic relation to Aristotle’s discussion of substance.

While things are known in their concrete individuality, one begins to understand the hierarchy of meanings when Lonergan explores things with respect to explanatory

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15 *Insight*, 271.

16 “For the Aristotelian substantial form is what is known by grasping an intelligible unity, an *unum per se.*” *Insight*, 462.
genera and species. As will be explained below, explanatory genera form ordered and interlocking sets. Some are higher than others and include both lower and the higher sets of conjugates. One has found the genus most appropriate to a given thing when one does not need to proceed to a higher genus adequately to explain the sets of meanings that constitute it.

For example, consider my sister’s dog, Cody the Golden Retriever. Cody is a thing. He is an actually existing individual dog, different from each other dog, a “unity, identity, whole,” which is signified, according to my sister, by his name. It is possible, however, to consider Cody from a viewpoint that does not consider his sensitive animal psychology that merits the acquisition of a name. In mathematical terms, Cody is a set of vectors or geometric extensions represented by sets of correlated equations. A physicist would recognize the validity of those equations, but could introduce many more having to do with motion, transference of energy, and properties of matter—subjects that pure mathematics does not properly consider.

Continuing our example, a chemist could examine the same Cody, recognize the validity and utility of both the mathematical and physical descriptions, yet aver there is more to this story. Our chemist could draw on the field of organic chemistry to explain, for example, why the matter in Cody’s digestive tract operates the way it does. The physicist simply can say that these operations do exist, and that they follow the principles of quantum mechanics, but has to consider the ongoing set of reactions and relations of

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18 In the scientific terms Lonergan is here using, “thing” has no necessary derogatory connotation. In view here is not Martin Buber’s “I and Thou” distinction, with a thing necessarily falling on the side of “I and It.” Rather, a thing here indicates the ability of some entity, despite all its sets of relations, also to have an intelligible individuality.
animal digestion to be merely happy coincidences from her science’s point of view. The laws of physics do not adequately explain the intelligibility of the animal metabolic processes. Some new explanatory set of meanings (organic chemistry) is needed, a field that does not do away with the prior understandings but adds something to them.

And, a biologist would say much the same thing to our chemist. For, while the chemist can describe Cody adequately in chemical terms, she can say relatively little of the biological distinctions and qualities that make this particular set of chemical entities and reactions a dog, let alone a Golden Retriever. All of the lower conjugates (mathematical, physical, chemical) survive—Cody is still understandable in those terms. However, to stop the consideration of Cody in the lower terms and consider that a complete understanding of Cody would involve either misunderstanding or ignoring evidence. A higher set of conjugates (a higher genus) is required in order to form an adequate understanding of a dog.

A human psychologist, however, would be quite surprised to have Cody presented to him for psychotherapy. Pet psychologists do exist, it is true, yet the rational sets of meanings that constitute human life seem to have limited application to a dog.19 The psychologist would have to proceed in an exceptionally different way if my sister, not Cody, were his patient. Use of symbolism, chains of reasoning, and aesthetic apprehension constitute my sister’s world in a way they do not constitute Cody’s. Therefore, while the genus applicable to Cody is animal (species, dog; sub-species

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19 Lonergan’s use of “rational” does not exclude any functioning of intelligence or psychology in non-human animal species. However, he held the reflective knowing of reality in judgments of fact and judgments of value to be specifically human. See *Insight*, 290, 438-439.
Golden Retriever), my sister’s genus is human. The conjugates that constitute animal being survive in her, but her proper intelligibility is as something greater.  

The Human Good

Just how great Lonergan considered that particularly human intelligibility to be can be seen from the chapter in *Method in Theology* on “The Human Good,” and from his much earlier but perhaps more ambitious essay on “Finality, Love, Marriage.” In these works, Lonergan discusses the way in which and the ends toward which we humans are ordered. Lonergan’s analysis speaks to who we are and what we are called to become in both individual and social terms, both as those who live in history and as those who are called to transcend it.

Presentation of the Charts

The scope of Lonergan’s project can be seen in a series of probably related charts. Five charts having to do with the relation of different aspects of human meaning exist: one from “Finality, Love, Marriage” (published 1943), one from Lonergan’s notes for a class on marriage taught at the College of the Immaculate Conception (taught in either 1941-1942 or 1944-1945), one from the aforementioned chapter in *Method in Theology* (published 1972), one from a lecture on judgments of Value at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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20 To take this progression to its end term, consider if Cody were presented not to a psychologist but to a priest, with the idea of making confession.

of Technology (1972), and one from a lecture on the human good (1976).\textsuperscript{22} Taken collectively, the scope of the charts is massive, truly reaching beyond this world.

The charts do not treat human reality in exactly the same way; the charts in \textit{Method} and “The Human Good” deal with the general human realities, while the charts on marriage are more specific and tailored to marriage. Also, the charts in \textit{Method} and “The Human Good” treat the human good in a way that does not always explicitly bring that good into relation to the absolutely transcendent. The charts on marriage do.

In that Lonergan does not specifically reference the charts on the human good to his earlier charts on marriage, my grouping of them together must be understood in limited terms. I do not claim that the marriage charts are an earlier version of the charts on the human good. Such a viewpoint would be flat-footed and not adequate to an author whose thinking did not stand still. On the other hand, I will argue that dynamics exist in the earlier charts, and are illustrated in a powerful way, which do survive in his later works and which greatly help understand the way he proceeds in \textit{Method in Theology}.

My main question deals with the literature surrounding \textit{Method in Theology}. Therefore, I will use some aspects of the chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage” so that the chart in \textit{Method} would be better understood. In this way I hope to explain some of the meanings I believe are being assumed and subsumed by the explicit relations given in

\textsuperscript{22} Lonergan, \textit{Collection}, x-xi, gives a reproduction of the chart from Lonergan’s lecture notes. Lonergan taught the course twice, and it is uncertain for which class the notes were prepared. The final two charts can be found in Bernard Lonergan, “The Human Good,” in \textit{Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980}, 334, and Bernard Lonergan, “What Are Judgments of Value?” in \textit{Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980}, 147.
Method’s chart. I also hope to begin to explain how the relations indicated in Method’s chart are related to the healing and elevation of the human good.

Here is the chart from Method in Theology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Ends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potentiality</td>
<td>Actuation</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capacity, need</td>
<td>operation</td>
<td>institution, role, task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plasticity, perfectibility</td>
<td>development, skill</td>
<td>personal relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberty</td>
<td>orientation, conversion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: The Human Good Chart from Method in Theology

The chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage,” is done in algebraic notation and has the very interesting addition of vector lines.

[See Figure 3, following page]

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23 The chart from Lonergan’s lecture notes is of interest for constructing a Lonerganian systematic theology, but for my purposes in this paper it will suffice to examine the charts in Method and in “Finality, Love, Marriage.” The chart in “What Are Judgments of Value?” is supplied by the editors of that essay from the chart in Method; Lonergan drew it on a chalk-board, and if it differs from the chart in Method, Lonergan gives no indication. The chart in “The Human Good” exactly reproduces the chart in Method, with the addition of numbers along the top and letters along the side (numbering the columns and lettering the rows). Additions from the explanation of the charts in the addresses “The Human Good,” and “What Are Judgments of Value?” that are significant will be noted in this text when they serve the purpose of helping to understand the chart in Method in Theology. The material on feelings from “What Are Judgments of Value?,” however, will be addressed in my chapter on feelings.

24 See Lonergan, Method, 48. The above chart follows exactly the content and organization of the actual chart in Method, but has helpfully had borders and table lines added for clarity by Frederick Lawrence. Frederick Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” in Lonergan and Communication: Common Ground for Forging the New Age, ed. by T. Farrell and P. Soukup (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1993), 250.

This chart (Figure 3) exists in relation to an ordered sequence given in the text, also expressed in algebraic notation. It is this:\(^{26}\)

\[
P \rightarrow P' \rightarrow P'' \\
X \rightarrow X' \rightarrow X'' \\
Q \rightarrow Q' \rightarrow Q'' \\
Y \rightarrow Y' \rightarrow Y'' \\
Z \rightarrow Z' \rightarrow Z''
\]

Figure 4: The Algebraic Ordered Sequence from “Finality, Love, Marriage”

In this ordered sequence, P is described as the level of grace, Q is described as the level of reason, and R is described as the level of nature. The P sequence and the Q sequence have the same significations between the chart and the ordered sequence.

Replacing the algebraic symbols with their explanations from the article and expressing the ordered sequence in chart form with its context produces the following expanded set of charts:\(^{27}\)

\(^{26}\) “Finality, Love, Marriage,” 40-42.

\(^{27}\) See “Finality, Love, Marriage,” 40-45.
The Expanded Charts from “Finality, Love, Marriage”

The mystical body on earth → Further communication of sanctifying grace → The triumphant mystical body in heaven

The special order of charity between husband and wife → The sacramental marriage bond → Christianly educated offspring

The life of knowledge and virtue → Advance in knowledge and virtue → Man’s attainment of the historically unfolding good life

The friendship of husband and wife → The marriage contract → Procreation and education of children

Fecundity and sex → The actuation of fecundity and sex in the organic union of man and wife → Adult offspring

The level of grace

The mystical body on earth → Further communication of sanctifying grace → The triumphant mystical body in heaven

The level of reason

The life of knowledge and virtue → Advance in knowledge and virtue → Men’s attainment of the historically unfolding good life

The level of nature

Physical, vital, sensitive spontaneity → The actuation of such physical, vital, sensitive spontaneity → The emergence and maintenance of human life

Figure 5: The Expanded Chart and Ordered Sequence from “Finality, Love, Marriage”
Explanation of the Chart in *Method in Theology*

Despite the absence of the arrows, the chart in *Method* does indicate an intricately ordered set of relations. Such ordering is made clear by the text in which Lonergan explains the meanings and relations of the different words in the chart. In contrast to the chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage,” the structure of meanings and realities listed in the chart in *Method* moves from above downwards (from “capacity, need” in the most basic position to “terminal values” in the final position). These meanings are interrelated. As Frederick Lawrence observes, Lonergan’s method in this chart is heuristic.\(^{28}\) That is, we learn what each entry means by relating it to the others. The chart helps us come to an ordered set of meanings.

In the first place, one should note the overall structure of the chart in *Method*. The top line in the chart indicates that it deals with both individual and social aspects of the human good, as well as with the ends that constitute the human good. Who humans are and what we do as discrete persons, who we are and what we do corporately, and the concrete results—these realities form the widest level of organization of Lonergan’s description of the structure of the human good.

Secondarily, discrete (individual) human beings have the potentiality (possibility) to do or become certain things. If that possibility becomes real in some way, the individual human beings actuate those potentialities. Thus, within the Individual structure of the human good we find a relation of potency and act in close relation to Aristotle’s usage (described in my second chapter).

\(^{28}\) Frederick Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 250.
Within the ordered elements of the chart itself, the first set of relations Lonergan explains is the sequence along the top of the chart moving from “capacity, need” to “particular goods.” Individual humans have the ability to do certain things (capacity), which capacity is actuated in the service of meeting desires for things both necessary and merely wanted (needs). The actuation of the capacity results in a concrete activity (operation) growing out of the need and possibly suited to meet it. As Lonergan notes, few human needs can be met well by the individual alone. At a place of central importance for the production of concrete products, actions or arrangements that meet human needs (in other words, for the production of particular goods), one finds that humans must live and work together (cooperation).

Only in the most undeveloped situations, however, or in the most incidental acts of cooperation toward these particular goods would one picture scattered or random humans happening to work together. In most human societies, and in the pursuit of most of the significant particular goods, humans work together as part of determinate structures (institutions). Such institutions could be as simple as a nuclear family, as mundane as a corporate office or factory, as wide-ranging as the Roman Catholic Church. Political entities such as cities and clans and nations, educational units such as colleges and schools, community groups such as a Rotary Club, or a simple group of friends sharing life together—all these kinds of organization (institutions) provide the concrete ways that human beings most commonly work together. And, the functioning of such groups allows and requires specialization (role); each person regularly fulfills a set of
functions or responsibilities (tasks), according to ability, bent or necessity, in a way that her efforts can help meet the needs of the many.\textsuperscript{29}

Moving in second row of the chart’s entries, human capacity is not a static thing. In the pursuit of meeting their needs, humans can adapt their way of functioning (plasticity) and can also improve it (perfectibility). These improvements, when adapting to meet concrete situations of need, tend to have the ability to be recurrent; a person learns to meet similar situations of need in a regular way, without having to learn the same lesson over again every time (development). These recurrent, structured applications of intelligence become skills that, as a matter of fact, allow each person to play roles in meeting the needs of his institutions, or of the world served by the given institutions.

As stated at the start of this chapter, the good is always concrete. The application of skills by actual people playing roles in real institutions will result in an actually existing social order. This social order will serve to meet certain human needs well, others less well, perhaps some not at all. The instances of particular goods are not isolated; indeed, most of them were gained by cooperation. As Lonergan says, “This concrete manner, in which cooperation actually is working out, is what is meant by the good of order.”\textsuperscript{30} One does not have, for example, an abstract democratic capitalism or an idealized extended family. Rather, there exist the United States and the Cone clan. In this nation and clan, human needs are met either well, poorly or inadequately (or some combination of those in various respects). The recurrent functioning of each system (in

\textsuperscript{29} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 50-51.

\textsuperscript{30} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 49.
the ordering of operations by cooperation, in the actual performance of the individuals involved on the basis of their decisions and desires) to meet human needs, socially and over time, is the actually existing good of order.\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 49.}

In explaining his meaning of the good of order here in \textit{Method}, Lonergan refers to his discussion of emergent probability in \textit{Insight}.\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 49n16.} Joseph Flanagan relevantly reflects,

> The form or intelligibility which informs or explains the unity of these successive higher levels of being is ‘emergent probability,’ and that ‘form,’ which we have identified as emergent probability, is actually being realized ‘in accord with successively changing schedules of probabilities.’ In other words, the concrete universe of proportionate being is presently ‘emerging,’ and while the order of that emergence is intelligible as a whole, it is not a finished whole, and its actual unfolding is not certain but probable, and these probabilities shift from less to more as things and their schemes change. This does not mean that the universe is not effectively organized; probabilities are very effective ways of ordering results in the long run of events.\footnote{Joseph Flanagan, \textit{Quest for Self Knowledge}, 163.}

The good of order that actually comes to exist reflects the possibilities and probabilities inherent in our world and personal/social functioning. Let me here note that to change the probability schedule of a kind of personal or social functioning is therefore to change which particular goods are pursued, how regularly they are obtained, and what good of order concretely comes to exist.

The final set of relations Lonergan explains in the chart intersects directly with the topic of this work. For, on the bottom row, Lonergan lists liberty, orientation, conversion (this work’s topic), personal relations and terminal values. Liberty is the positive resolution by the subject of human capacity and plasticity in self-determination.\footnote{See Lawrence, “Lonergan and Communication,” 260.}
Among all the ways human ability can adapt to meet human need, one must be chosen in a given situation. One becomes free (actuates one’s capacity for liberty) when, in situations capable of voluntary decision, one brings the process of deliberation to an end and determines who one is and what one will do. In liberty, the human subject decides to end the process of deliberation and chooses a course of action.

Choices can be made randomly, but as was evidenced in the discussion of skills, actual individuals tend to make choices according to tendencies or patterns (that is, the actuation of our liberty tends to follow or form a certain orientation). Not all orientations to action are equal, however. Some, for example, pursue only apparent goods, some pursue real goods. A person could have a regular way of choosing (an orientation of her liberty) that is destructive, in that the goods it pursues are merely apparent. Humans, however, can change (plasticity), and they can change for the better (perfectibility). If an individual’s orientation changes from pursuit of what is only apparently good, no matter how satisfying, to that which is truly good, that person has experienced moral self-transcendence (moral conversion). That is, the person has chosen to actuate her potential according to an ultimate source of value outside mere personal satisfactions, and has thereby come into more authentic relation to that which is truly of value.35

As an orientation, this change (of moral conversion) affects the probability schedule according to which that which is truly of value is sought and chosen. It does not work with absolute certainty to determine every choice the person makes. However, in this change in orientation she has introduced into her life a principle that transcends the

mere calculation of pleasures and pains attending any particular choice. She has, thereby, become a more authentic human being.\textsuperscript{36}

Despite the prominence given to the individual here, the exercise of human liberty is not actualized in isolation. Lonergan puts it this way (and notice the number of terms from the chart here drawn together):

Liberty is exercised within a matrix of personal relations. In the cooperating community persons are bound together by their needs and by the common good of order that meets their needs. They are related by the commitments they have freely undertaken and by the expectations they have aroused in others by the commitments, by the roles they have assumed and by the tasks that they meet to perform.\textsuperscript{37}

Our basic human capacity for cooperation comes into existence as we play roles and accomplish tasks as part of our various human institutions. However, institutions never really become reducible to titles, functions, rules or any of their common accompaniments. The roles and tasks are commitments undertaken in liberty from one person to another, from one group to another, in the service of the actually existing common good (or perhaps to put it better, the institutions and good of order exist to promote the establishment and benefit of rightly ordered personal relations).

In his discussion of personal relations, Lonergan adds two aspects of special importance. First, Lonergan mentions the feelings that normally accompany personal relations. In this seemingly simple word is hidden a wealth of significance, and a full development of it must wait until my seventh chapter. At the present time, please note that Lonergan here indicates that feelings bring life to relationships. They are mentioned in relation to the choices concerning which values are worth-while and, among those that

\textsuperscript{36} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 50.

\textsuperscript{37} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 50.
are judged worth-while, which are to be preferred over the others. Feelings are also mentioned relating to the way in which one responds to another as an “ontic value” and not a mere source of satisfactions (i.e., perhaps by choosing to enter into an “I-Thou” instead of an “I-It” relation, to use Buber’s terms).\textsuperscript{38}

Second, Lonergan speaks of the “substance of community.”\textsuperscript{39} He indicates that the substance of community goes beyond feelings, but the description that follows indicates that feelings form an integral part of the community’s substance:

People are joined by common experience, by common or complementary insights, by similar judgments of fact and of value, by parallel orientations in life. They are separated, estranged, rendered hostile, when they have got out of touch, when they misunderstand one another, when they judge in opposed fashions, opt for contrary social goals. So personal relations vary from intimacy to ignorance, from love to exploitation, from respect to contempt, from friendliness to enmity. They bind a community together or divide it into factions, or tear it apart.\textsuperscript{40}

The operation of intelligence and the effect of feelings are inter-related aspects of the concrete instantiation of community. As the choices of human liberty become the orientations not just of individuals but of communities, decisions made about what is real and what is good can either reinforce or compete against each other. Fellow-feeling and alienation, cooperation and enmity become dynamics in our personal relations that move us and our groups either to reinforce, attack or transform the existing good of order.

There remains the question of whether the good of order that actually exists is really good. Is it truly oriented to that which is really of value? For example, by the above definition, the operation of a drug cartel is a good of order. Such a cartel (the


\textsuperscript{39} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 50.

\textsuperscript{40} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 50-51.
institution) organizes a great number of people in specialized roles (from farmers to refiners to transportation specialists; including bankers and lawyers; moving through distribution channels to final dealers). It involves leadership, courage, application of skill, and fosters a number of personal relations. It, in a way, meets a variety of human needs. But, one can question whether the good of order that comes to exist and many of the particular goods it serves are consistent with the pursuit of what is really of value.\textsuperscript{41}

One might, on examination, conclude that this good of order is a destructive ordering. Thus arises the question of terminal value. To what extent does the transcendental notion of value regulate the processes by which the good of order comes to exist, the cooperation in which context particular goods are chosen and pursued? If what is truly of value is attained, and not merely what is apparently of value, then the good of order and the particular goods achieve terminal value.\textsuperscript{42}

Transcendence and the Human Good

In this way, Lonergan explains the structure of the human good in chapter two of \textit{Method in Theology}. It is an encompassing vision of human society. To understand it well, however, we must examine some of its elements and relations more carefully in the full context of \textit{Method} and of Lonergan’s earlier works.

\textsuperscript{41} In “The Human Good,” Lonergan specifies that a good of order is when the institutions are working well, not just any arrangement that happens to take place. By that definition, a dysfunctional family or tyrannical governmental structure might, on consideration, be seen as a deficient good of order; “something is missing,” as Lonergan says. In \textit{Method}, the well-functioning of the good of order in meeting human needs seems more directly addressed under the topic of terminal values. Lonergan, “The Human Good,” 343.

\textsuperscript{42} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 51.
In some of Lonergan’s works there is an authorial technique he calls a “moving viewpoint.”\textsuperscript{43} To put it simply, the author proceeds in a way that both matches his implied reader’s current level of understanding and encourages it to grow. As the level of the implied reader’s understanding grows, more and more of the author’s full understanding can be revealed. The book \textit{Insight}, most famously, employs such a moving viewpoint.\textsuperscript{44} While there is no evidence that Lonergan wrote \textit{Method} with the same kind of moving viewpoint, at the least he does not try to say everything at once. A number of the elements discussed in the chart will receive much greater development later in \textit{Method}. The grandeur of this scheme will be seen in this light, also informed by the insights garnered from Lonergan’s earlier works.

Incarnate Meaning

Returning to the motivating thesis of this chapter, let me reinforce that the various relations and entries given in this chart involve meanings. At a social level, for example, the cooperation that produces particular goods is the basic way human beings find each other and come to know each other. The institutions resulting from regular cooperation may have formal codifications of their meanings (such as the mission statement of a college or a couple’s wedding vows), but will in any case have some intelligible relation among the participants toward each other and toward some human need. The good of order that results from our cooperation, bolstered and formed by these institutions, is a rich tapestry of relations, not a random grouping of actions. And, personal relations are

\textsuperscript{43} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 17-18.

\textsuperscript{44} The progress of this moving viewpoint can lead to somewhat abrupt transitions, for example, that occurring when one progresses into chapters nineteen and twenty of \textit{Insight}.
served by the good of order and often where we individuals find our deepest human meanings.

Throughout the description of the chart, additionally, remember that what has allowed us to come to intelligible understandings of each component of the chart is that these components are intelligibly related. Knowing what liberty is, knowing the way our choices coalesce into intelligible orientations in life, knowing the way these orientations become components of our groups and the way our liberty finds fulfillment in personal relationships—to know each of these individual realities is to know an intelligible set of relations.\textsuperscript{45} Meaning (or the flight from it) inheres in the structure of human life.

Lonergan, indeed, considered human beings to be incarnate acts of meaning.\textsuperscript{46} In the context of our intersubjectivity, as conveyed in our arts and use of symbols, as embodied and liberated in our use of language, as spoken most deeply in the inner word of our hearts, human life is a life of meaning. Lonergan said of incarnate meaning, “It is the meaning of a person, of his way of life, of his words or of his deeds. It may be his meaning for just one other person, or for a small group, or for a whole national, or social, or cultural, or religious tradition.”\textsuperscript{47} The chart concerning the structure of the human good is a graphic expression of the search for a life of meaning. It describes us as we either seek or turn away from, both individually and corporately, “What is the best, the most choiceworthy, way of life?”\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45} See Lonergan’s discussion of “Things” in \textit{Insight}, 270-295.

\textsuperscript{46} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 73.

\textsuperscript{47} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 73.

\textsuperscript{48} Frederick Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 250.
The way of life that we find becomes the meaning that we are. While Lonergan’s vision includes who we are as mathematically, physically, chemically and biologically describable beings, a deeper and more defining level of understanding human life is the level of rational meaning. Meanings are not just concepts through which we understand some itself irrational being. Meanings are constitutive of human living and being.49 A change in the meanings that structure us becomes a change in our persons and communities, in our way of life. It becomes a change in the meaning that we are.

Vertical Finality

As a second point, the chart in *Method in Theology* deals specifically with the human good. It ends with a consideration of terminal value as to whether the human good of order and particular goods (the sum total and product of all our efforts, both individually and in personal relationships), is truly good. However, to understand what Lonergan means by the human good we must consider human life as on a trajectory that leads to supernatural life. In other words, we must consider in what ways grace is a part of this process, how the human good properly relates to supernatural good, and in what ways human life is destined for or already experiencing eternal life.

The fuller answer to this question will be in chapters four through eight, but to begin to answer these questions, we turn to “Finality, Love, Marriage.” Relating the chart in *Method* to the chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage,” is not entirely transparent, and

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this interpretation must be clearly admitted to be a possibly relevant explanation. However, as stated above, some of the relations and realities expressed in *Method*’s chart stand in genetic relation to the charts on marriage.

For example, what Lonergan describes as a human family unit in the chart on marriage arguably stands in genetic relationship to “institutions” in the chart on the human good. The meaning of this institution is represented and solemnified by the marriage contract. The lower conjugates of biological life, resulting in some of the situations of human need, are indicated in the level of nature and in the existence, actuation and production of fecundity and sex. The personal relations of husband and wife are described by a characteristic friendship. While, again, these relations and dynamics are not to be imported into and imposed upon the chart in *Method*, I argue that they provide a strong graphic representation of relations and dynamics that do survive in the later work.

“Finality, Love, Marriage” belongs to the early period of Lonergan’s authorship in which the terms of faculty psychology prevailed. As discussed in chapter one of this work, the viewpoint of Lonergan’s later writings (such as the chart in *Method*) is genetically related to his earlier work. Thus, for example, Lonergan in *Method* is speaking in terms of the transcendental notion of Value (known through interiority analysis) and not of the Good (a metaphysically posited entity). As I argued in chapter one, the insights of the earlier work can be used to enrich the later if one keeps this genetic relation, and the need for translation, in mind.

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50 Lonergan’s explanation of human sexuality here goes beyond its merely biological aspects to include emotional and distinctly human aspects.
Lonergan’s analysis of marriage and the family in “Finality, Love, Marriage” hinges on his understanding of vertical finality. Vertical finality is a notion with a long history in Lonergan’s works. In 1943, it gives the title for the first numbered section of “Finality, Love, Marriage,” and also provides the dynamic that allows the article to make its point.\(^{51}\) It does exactly the same for Lonergan’s 1985 article entitled “Mission and the Spirit.”\(^{52}\) Although rarely named as such, it provides the dynamic that allows *Method in Theology* to give its vision of how intelligibility builds or breaks down in this world that is ordered to God.\(^{53}\)

In Lonergan’s usage, “finality” has a relation to the Greek term *telos*. A *telos* is a goal, or end, toward which some activity is directed.\(^{54}\) “Finality,” then, does not here have to do with the contemporary usage that refers to the way something stops or expires. Rather, it speaks of the way something has some intelligible impetus beyond itself or its current reality.\(^{55}\)

Despite its Greek heritage, Frederick Crowe notes the way this term does not simply reduce to Aristotelian notions.

The key word here becomes ‘finality,’ but it should be noted at once for the avoiding of much misunderstanding, that finality is not the final cause


\(^{53}\) See, for example, the section on “A Dynamic Unity” in the chapter on “Functional Specialties” in *Method*. Lonergan, *Method*, 138-145.


\(^{55}\) See Lonergan’s section on “Potency and Finality,” in *Insight*, 470-476.
of the Scholastics; that was an extrinsic cause, but Lonergan’s finality, denoting an immanent intelligibility, would pertain to an intrinsic cause, just as much as does the *logos* which Aristotle discovered in material reality. Nor is finality to be *imagined*, as though it were some very thin, very strong towline pulling the material reality into the future, or a jet engine somewhere within the body. Finality, then, does not pertain to fancy but to fact, to the present reality of this particular body, but to that reality as intelligible, and specifically to its development as intelligible.

What then is finality? It is the dynamic aspect of the real. It is not merely dynamism but directed dynamism.\(^56\)

In this world of change, then, there is some intelligibility to the sequence of changes. This intelligibility is not imposed from outside each thing but rather involves a directedness toward a certain kind of change inherent in things themselves.

Remembering earlier discussion, such directedness has a relation to emergent probability which should not be surprising. For emergent probability expresses exactly the propensity toward intelligible change, according to probabilities, inherent in space and time. However, as we will now begin to develop, and as indicated in the chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage,” Lonergan’s explanation of finality also expresses ways in which we are called to transcend space and time.

According to Lonergan’s essay on “Mission and the Spirit,” finality can be either absolute, horizontal or vertical.

Absolute finality is to God. For every end is an instance of the good, and every instance of the good has its ground and goal in absolute goodness.

Horizontal finality is to the proportionate end, the end that results from what a thing is, what follows from it, and what it may exact.

Vertical finality is to an end higher than the proportionate end. It supposes a hierarchy of entities and ends. It supposes the subordination of the lower to the higher.\(^57\)


Thus, the goal or purpose relevant to all of being is God, for God is the source of everything and gives intelligibility to all possible intelligible, intelligent and reasonable purposes (whether they seek God or turn away from God). As created by God, however, things have purposes or goals inherent to their mode of being. An acorn has finality toward being an oak tree. Male and female cats together have finality toward producing kittens. But the world we live in has what Lonergan calls a vertical dimension. That is to say that what something is and does can become involved in a way of being and doing that has greater meaning, higher intelligibility.

Relations of horizontal and vertical finality are the meanings of the arrows in the chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage.” The existence in human organisms of the capacity for fecundity and sex has horizontal finality toward becoming actualized in sexual union. That sexual union has a horizontal finality toward procreation—the children produced are the proportionate end of the actualized fecundity and sex of a man and woman (the intelligible result, if nothing goes wrong, of the way human heterosexuality works). Yet a marriage is much more than a fertile man’s and a fertile woman’s having sex, or even of their actually producing children together. This procreation could be an entirely casual affair, not something involving the special friendship that should characterize husband and wife, symbolized and concretized through some form of socially approved marriage contract. Human fecundity and sex have vertical finality toward marriage, toward the friendship of husband and wife and their marriage vows. Fecundity and sex remain themselves, remain the intelligibility they have on their own level of being, but become transformed by incorporation in a greater reality.
With regard to the incorporation of (biological) fecundity and sex into the higher (rational) reality of the friendship of marriage, Lonergan notes something remarkable:

Man is rational. Even if often reason is no more than the mere servant of reflective appetite, even then the actuation of bisexual fecundity is a friendship of pleasure and mutual advantage. But, as Aristotle observed, husband and wife have only to be decent people for their friendship to be one of virtue, that is, one based upon the objective lovableness of qualities of mind and character. Here it is remarkable that Aristotle counted the friendship of virtue something rare, so that a minimum of virtue, simple decency, obtains for husband and wife what only exceptional virtue obtains elsewhere. Such, then, is the dispositive upward tendency of sex to human friendship, an upthrust that is realized when even a mediocre life of knowledge and virtue (Q) sets up a human friendship (Y) to incorporate on the level of reason an actuation of erōs and sex (Z).58

This passage is worth quoting at length because it demonstrates an extremely important dynamic in Lonergan’s analysis of how new realities come to be, a dynamic that is central to the question of this paper. Before marriage or without sex, the two people involved had a lower chance of developing the highest type of friendship. Given the incorporation of sex into the friendship of marriage (please remember that Lonergan here considered the emotional, intellectual and relational aspects and finality of sex), the probability of their developing the highest type of friendship is relatively high. Sex has a “dispositive upward tendency to human friendship.” That is, the incorporation of sex into the friendship of marriage alters the probability schedule according to which the various types of friendship come to exist.59

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58 Lonergan, “Finality, Love, Marriage,” 44. The letters refer to the entries in the chart, using their algebraic notation.

59 One should note that Lonergan is stretching Aristotle’s philosophy here in order to make a point. One should certainly not read this passage to indicate that only people who have sexual intercourse are likely to become real friends. Rather, Lonergan is setting forth a twin dynamic that posits that the way the level of nature is elevated by reason is analogous to the way the level of reason is elevated by grace.
One of the most important aspects of Lonergan’s understanding of emergent probability is that it renders intelligible ways that something which, in itself, is quite improbable can be rendered probable by given situations. For example, antecedently, it is quite improbable that an oak tree would grow in my parents’ back yard. However, given the existence of an acorn, my willingness to plant it, and appropriate hydration and nutrition, the emergence of an oak tree becomes relatively probable over time. In marriage, given the finality of sexual union, the probability schedule usual for human friendship is altered, replaced by a new one in which the participants have only to be decent people to achieve the friendship of virtue (which is otherwise rare).

As can be seen from the chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage,” Lonergan develops the scholastic notion that grace perfects nature. For, vertical finality does not end with finality toward the world of being proportionate to the merely human. Extremely important is the inclusion here of three levels (nature, reason and grace) in a place where a purely Scholastic analysis would have expected only two (nature and grace). The analysis of the reality of marriage in three levels allows Lonergan to sketch two parallel dynamics. The finality of the rational level toward the level of grace is analogous to the finality of the natural (sexual—organistic) level toward the rational level of friendship.

Human marriage has finality toward incorporation of its participants into the mystical body of Christ. Through the gift of charity, specially given between husband and wife, communicated and strengthened through the sacramental marriage bond, the good to which husband and wife are called far exceeds the historically unfolding human good life. And, not only are husband and wife called to this higher reality, the
communication of the grace of charity renders it probable that the individuals who make up the couple will achieve that which was impossible for them on their own.60

The chart in *Method* does not reach so high as the Beatific Vision and Life of Charity in the world to come. It deals specifically with the human good. Its highest level, that of terminal good, describes what “Finality, Love, Marriage’s” chart describes as “man’s attainment of the historically unfolding good life,” if that historically unfolding good of order actually does actuate that which is truly of value. Taken in the wider context of *Method*, however, one can see that the elements in the chart are open to relations with supernatural blessedness characterized by vertical finality. This openness toward vertical finality exists especially in religious conversion (one of the conversions that transforms the individual’s orientations). Religious conversion either prepares for or actually results in the gift of charity through which human incorporation into the divine life begins. Vertical finality toward the supernatural, however, is not restricted to religious conversion, however. As I will argue in chapter four, everything is different once supernatural love becomes involved.

A full development of the conversions must wait until the chapter six. However, I can indicate something here from the charts about how they work. Returning to the chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage,” a friendship of virtue is one in which the habits of the virtues have become dominant. Recalling our earlier discussion, Lonergan developed the Aristotelien notion of habit within the context of his methodical theology. Using Piaget’s psychology, Lonergan reinterpreted *habitus* as a “skill” developed within the regular operation of human consciousness itself.

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60 See Lonergan, “Grace and Freedom,” 352-355, for an explanation of the way in which charity transcends merely human love.
In the chart in *Method*, orientation provides the overall intelligible direction for the development of skills. That is, orientation describes the probability schedule in which it is more or less likely for certain skills to develop or not develop. A change in orientation means a change in the probability schedule for which skills actually do develop (including those analogous to Aquinas’ cardinal virtues). Over time, this change in probability schedule will make likely a change in the particular goods that are pursued and obtained, and in the goods of order that come to exist. But a conversion is exactly a particular type of change in orientation, a certain type of change in the probability schedule that governs what or who an individual is likely to become and how that individual over time is likely to act. It is a change in the meanings that constitute us, that regulate and render intelligible the meaning that we are.

To look ahead, religious conversion is a gift that renders possible the development of skills by a human individual that are supernatural. Moral conversion renders development of skills probable that are analogous to Aquinas’ cardinal virtues, as well as enhancing the probability of a development of the theoretical pattern of existence. Intellectual conversion positively alters the probability schedule concerning the development of critical realism, a maturing and purifying of the human relation to being as true. These three conversions indicate horizons within which these skills can develop more readily (or, in some cases, at all). And, as will be clarified below, there exist relations of dependence and finality among these conversions. Indeed, the question of this work is the relation between moral conversion and religious conversion.

Horizons
Before the full-fledged discussion of moral and religious conversion in chapter six, however, it is necessary to fill in the blanks, or the spaces and arrows, that separate the entries on the charts and that allow the sets of intelligibilities mentioned in this chapter to have real organization. In discussing “things,” with their explanatory genera, and the entries in the charts, with their sets of relations, I have already implicitly spoken of horizons. Moving from consideration of Cody the Golden Retriever merely in chemical terms to consideration of the same dog in biological terms is to move from the horizon of chemical analysis to the horizon of biological analysis. In “Finality, Love, Marriage,” in Lonergan’s analysis, moving vertically from one row of the chart to another is moving from one horizon to another. Moving horizontally within a row of a chart is movement or development within a horizon. The same vertical-horizontal dynamics may exist in the chart in Method, but it is more difficult to prove. At the least, though, the inter-related entities in the chart in Method are open to being drawn into a wider horizon characterized by grace. To make explicit this important model of understanding reality, I will draw mainly from Lonergan’s address on “Horizons” of 1968.  

To begin the discussion, Lonergan notes that horizon, taken philosophically, has a meaning analogous to its physical/visual meaning. Horizon, taken literally, denotes the line or curve where the earth (or sea) and sky appear to meet. That which is within the boundary marked by the horizon is at least potentially within one’s field of view. That which is beyond the horizon is not. However, as one walks or sails or drives, one’s

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61 The central locus for Method’s discussion of horizons is in the section by that name in the chapter on functional specialty Dialectics. Method, 235-237. As the editors note in Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980, page 10, much of the 1968 address was incorporated into Method with little or no change.
horizon changes. New objects come into view and others may fade away. And, the horizon in one place (such as standing amid the wide prairies of central Illinois) may differ radically from the horizon in another place (such as standing in a valley in the White Mountains).\textsuperscript{62}

Analogously, that which is within my horizon is in some way known to me and in some way an object of my interest.\textsuperscript{63} As one’s education, experience and interests change, one’s horizon is said to change, or develop. In a real way, as our horizons change there comes about a corresponding change in the world in which we live, because this world is a world of meanings, some of which we constitute ourselves and some of which exist in the meanings of personal relations and institutions of which we are a part.

As Gadamer comments, philosophically, the notion of “horizon” results from a development in the phenomenology of Husserl in which Husserl became more “sufficiently aware of the phenomenon of world.” That which is given to us as existent “is given in terms of a world and hence brings the world horizon with it.”\textsuperscript{64} One’s horizon is not the totality of the universe, but it is one’s world, in that it inheres in all the sets of meanings given to one in the universe of being.

Lonergan’s change from his earlier usage of “viewpoint” into that of “horizon” did take place in a context in which he was engaging Continental streams of philosophy.\textsuperscript{65} As he says in his 1958 lecture on \textit{Insight},

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{62} See Lonergan, “Horizons,” 10-11, and \textit{Method}, 235-235.
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Lonergan, “Horizons,” 10-11.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Gadamer, \textit{Truth and Method}, 245.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} See Bernard Lonergan, \textit{Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on “Insight,”} ed. by E. Morelli and M. Morelli, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. rev. by F. Crowe, \textit{et al.} (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), 146-148,
\end{itemize}
Now this universe of being is not identical with ‘my world’ – Heidegger’s *Welt*. My world is centered on me, and as I move out from that center in a series of concentric circles, my concern steadily decreases. If you think of a bus driver, a mechanic, a miner, and ask what his world is, well, it is his family, his relatives, his work, and so on. It is a world settled by concern, he is that concern, and about concerns beyond that world he does not care. He is the center of his world. It is the real for him. …

This results normally in a tension between one’s world and what is beyond one’s horizon. Everyone has his own world, and the universe of being is apt to seem very unreal by comparison.66

My interest, the concrete set of meanings with which I regularly concern myself, defines for me my world.67 That which is beyond that concrete set of meanings, centering around

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67 Lonergan’s use of horizon in this particular instance seems closest to Heidegger’s horizon of average everydayness in *Being and Time*. It may be helpful, at this point, to introduce a quote from Heidegger:

*In saying-I, Da-sein expresses itself as being-in-the-world.* But does everyday saying-I take itself as being-in-the-world [in-der-Welt-seiend]? Here we must make a distinction. Surely in saying-I Da-sein means the being that it itself always is. But the everyday interpretation of the self has the tendency to understand itself in terms of the “world” taken care of. When Da-sein has itself in view ontically, it fails to see itself in relation to the kind of being that it itself is. And that is particularly true of the fundamental constitution of Da-sein, being-in the world.

Lonergan’s usage is not an exact parallel of Heidegger’s because the two had quite different hermeneutical frameworks (to a great extent, different worlds). The difference is especially of note in terms of what Lonergan calls intellectual conversion, with which we will deal in the next chapter. However, Lonergan’s use of horizon does seem a powerful appropriation of Heidegger’s work. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of “Sein und Zeit,”* tr. by J. Sambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 296, emphasis and text in brackets original.

Frederick Lawrence notes that Heidegger’s task involved overcoming three modernist philosophies in which he had been educated: “conceptualist-Suarezian Scholasticism, neo-Kantianism in both its Marburg and Southwest German versions, and Husserlian phenomenology of perception with its Cartesian and Kantian assumptions.” Frederick Lawrence, “The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Postmodern Concern for the Other,” in *Lonergan and Communication*, 181.

In his authorship, Lonergan expended significant effort in finding a coherent and meaningful way beyond the difficulties inherent in these schools. Lonergan’s great controversy with Suarezian Scholasticism, for example, can be seen especially in the *Grace and Freedom* and the *Verbum* articles, and additionally in *De Ente Supernaturali; Insight* spends a great amount of effort in moving the modern search for knowing beyond the strictures and limitations of Kant; as can be seen exemplified in the present discussion, a number of Lonergan’s later works incorporated but extended and corrected the existential and phenomenological strains of Continental thought (see also, for example, Bernard Lonergan, “A New Pastoral Theology,” in *Lonergan, Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980*).
me, becomes of concern (and thence part of my world) only when some kind of upset or modification of my world is enacted or threatened by them. The great vastness of the universe of being, the totality of the real, stretches out infinitely farther. However, I live where I live, and my everyday horizon is constituted not by the absolute world of being but rather by that part of being I can and do care about.

Self-Transcendence as the Possibility of Horizon

Despite the possibly solipsistic and relativistic sound of the preceding paragraph, Lonergan believed that human beings can know the universe of being.68 Lonergan simply believed that humans come to know the universe of being in series of horizons.69 His discussion of horizon in his 1968 address proceeds in four headings, each of which develops this understanding of the human relation to knowing and being, or reality.

The first of those, “Self-transcendence as the Possibility of Horizon,” speaks to the thrust of the self toward knowing the universe of being. In this section, Lonergan states the following:

First, then, self-transcendence. One can live in a world, have a horizon, just in the measure that one is not locked up totally within oneself. The first step in this liberation is the sensitivity we share with the higher animals. But while they are confined to a habitat, we live in a universe, because beyond sensitivity we question, and our questioning is unrestricted.70

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68 See the chapter, “Self-affirmation of the Knower,” Insight, 343-371.

69 Stepping a bit away from Heidegger, one is reminded here of Newman’s real versus notional assents. Perhaps one can make this connection: That to which I can and do give real assent is within my horizon. That to which I can give only notional consent is marginally within my horizon, but not central to it. That to which I can give no assent whatever is beyond my horizon. See John Henry Newman, An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1979), 49-92.

The analogy of horizon presupposes that one’s horizon is not correlative to or coordinate with the totality of the real, or the totality of what is possible for one to grasp or know. Horizons can change or move. To have a horizon is to have the capacity to seek what is beyond one and one’s present limitations.71

Lonergan places the heart of this possibility of self-transcendence in our never-ceasing questioning. Prompted by wonder, we question, “Why?” We seek answers, and are not content merely to produce a set of possible explanations. We continue to ask, “Is that really so?” and “Does it really exist?” In achieving true answers to these questions, we achieve cognitive self-transcendence.

Our self-transcendence is not exhausted by questions of what and whether something is, though. We proceed to ask questions of value. “Is it good?” “Is it really worth-while?” “How do I live, therefore?” In these questions for deliberation, our self-transcendence is still intentional but moves toward our becoming real as we realize possible courses of action that are real. Insofar as we achieve correct answers to them, we have known and judged aright some aspect of the universe of being, of the real.72

“Because we can ask such questions and answer them and live by the answers, we can

71 Compare Gadamer’s assessment of the way Husserl’s phenomenological investigation was transformed by its examination of temporality and consciousness of time: This shows that the discreteness of experience (Erlebnis)—however much it may retain its methodological significance as the intentional correlate of a constituted meaning value—is not an ultimate phenomenological datum. Rather, every such intentional experience always implies a twofold empty horizon of what is not actually meant in it, but toward which an actual meaning can, of its nature, be directed; and the unity of the flow of experience obviously includes the whole of all experiences that can be thematized in this way. Even in the very act of attempting an analysis that views each of our experiences as separate, living in a horizon inherently means that the experiences we have and the meanings we seek draw us beyond themselves. Gadamer, Truth and Method, 245.

72 Recall the Augustinian correlation between the good and the real, mentioned above.
effect in our living a real self-transcendence.” Far from restricting us to a solipsistic, self-referential world, Lonergan, in his discussion of horizons, recognizes in human subjectivity itself a kind of ability for and need for self-transcendence.

Intentional Responses and Values

A capacity for self-transcendence, though, indicates some response of the human subject to the real. Lonergan addresses the more important of these responses in the next section, “Intentional Responses and Values.” By “intentional,” Lonergan does not mean “on purpose,” or at least not necessarily so. An intentional response is a response that has an object. More or less, it is about something. What the response “intends” is the object, what it is about. Therefore, if I am thinking about having a cup of coffee, my conscious act of thinking intends the cup of coffee, whether I deliberately chose to think about coffee or whether a coffee advertisement effectively invaded my mind. A non-intentional trend or state, on the other hand, might be some vague feeling of discomfort or anxiety, which I could well have before it ever entered my mind that what I need is a cup of coffee.

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74 Lonergan says, “Our position, then, parallels that of the existentialists, inasmuch as it can conceive man’s mere existing as his capacity for existing authentically or unauthentically; but it differs inasmuch as it discerns in self-transcendence both genuine subjectivity and the principle of genuine authenticity” (Lonergan, Horizons, 13). See my discussion in chapter two on objectivity and my discussion of intellectual conversion in the chapter six for what Lonergan means by objective and subjective.

75 Lonergan, Horizons, 13.

76 Lonergan’s use of “intentional” has some relation to Husserl’s, but see Lonergan’s critique of Husserl in Insight, 440.
These responses of the human subject toward what is real are addressed by Lonergan in terms of feelings.\textsuperscript{77} Some feelings are identified with or as non-intentional states or trends. We sometimes simply experience bad or good humor, fatigue, or even urges such as vague sexual dissatisfaction or hunger, without these states or trends arising from my conscious perceiving, understanding, judging and deciding. However, many feelings are intentional. They relate us not to a cause, such as a general mood, nor to an end, such as a feeling of deprivation not yet consciously identified, but to an object, a consciously identified thing.\textsuperscript{78}

As intentional responses, feelings give “our intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power.”\textsuperscript{79} Feelings, from love to hatred, from dread to hope, from reverence to trust to contempt, shape the orientations we have in relation to the world of meaning. These intentional feelings respond to that which is satisfying but also to that which is truly of value, that which is truly worth while. The extent to which our orientations are being shaped by responses that have to do with what is really worth while, and not just what is merely transitorily or personally satisfying, is the extent to which we are achieving real self-transcendence.

Just as the world to which intentional feelings respond is hierarchically ordered, so also Lonergan saw our feelings as being ordered in a scale of preferences.\textsuperscript{80} And, just as skills can develop (remember our discussion of Piaget’s theory of grouping of...
operations), so also feelings can develop, be fostered or repressed, be enriched, refined and educated. Our horizons can move, and in some cases we can move our horizons. If the scale of our preferences is ordered rightly, the responses of our feelings will more often correspond to that which is truly of value. Conversely, and perhaps more significantly, if the scale of our preferences is altered to prefer more often that which is truly of value, we are more likely rightly to judge and responsibly to deliberate concerning being and value.

The range of intentional responses to value Lonergan here discusses under “feelings” truly varies from the incidental to the monumental. As he says,

There are, of course, feelings that easily are aroused and easily pass away. But there are also feelings so deep and so strong, especially when deliberately reinforced, that they channel attention, shape one’s horizon, direct one’s life. Here the supreme illustration is loving.

Of loving, and the way loving transforms one’s life when it becomes the hallmark of one’s life, much will be said in discussing religious conversion. For the moment, suffice it to say that Lonergan considered our feelings both “to reveal to us where values lie and give us the power and momentum to rise above ourselves and accomplish what objectively is good.”

Feelings, when rightly ordered, have the double role of revealing the world to us and helping us to be in right relation to that world.
As part of a discussion of horizon, it is difficult not to connect the interest motivated by feelings with what Heidegger described as “care,” or “concern.”

Lonergan discusses Heidegger’s use of care (Sorge) in the already-quoted 1958 lecture on *Insight*. In this section, Lonergan makes it clear that his own philosophy and theology, though in dialogue with Heidegger’s existential phenomenology, cannot come to some of the same conclusions:

> The trouble, then, lies with the notion of the real. Is the real to be identified with the universe of being, or is it to be settled by my autobiography? The real for me may well be my Welt—my autobiography—and then the not-real is what I’m not concerned about. But the pure desire to know can also become a dominant Sorge, and then, though there will not be a complete elimination of purely personal concern, still this world of one’s concern will move into coincidence with the universe of being.

The “pure desire to know” means simply a person’s determination to know what is in fact the case, irrespective of the consequences. In addition to knowing a world in its hostility to me (as Heidegger emphasizes) there is also the relentless and restless following of wonder, the *erōs* to know the universe of being. Lonergan believed it possible for the latter, not the former, to become characteristic for us and to shape our being in the world.

But such an education of concern, in the context of Lonergan’s later theology, is exactly the dynamic I have just described as an alteration of our scale of preferences. The pure unrestricted desire to know is characteristic of our consciousness when its operations are guided by the transcendental notion of Being. Such a drive is instrumental

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84 See, for example, Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 279-306 (the chapter entitled “The Authentic Potentiality-for-Being-a-Whole of Da-sein, and Temporality as the Ontological Meaning of Care”).


in our coming to know the real (What is it? Is it so?). However, the real is constituted as
relations of meaning, in which it is also right and needful to ask questions for deliberation
(Is it good?). Drawing the dynamic Lonergan names in the 1958 lecture on *Insight* into
the context of *Method in Theology*, one would rightly add that having the transcendental
notion of Value as ordering the operation of our consciousness is also part of the
education of concern.

In questions for deliberation, the operation of our feelings, as I said above, have
the double role of revealing the world to us and helping us to be in right relation to that
world. Concern is not simply a given fact but rather something that is capable of being
rightly ordered. Its proper embodiment gives us “the power and momentum to rise above
ourselves and accomplish what is objectively good.”\(^87\) Hereby, we achieve authenticity,
a self-transcendence that places us in right relation to ourselves and to the world.\(^88\)

**Judgments of Value**

This self-transcendence is embodied in “Judgments of Value,” as indicated in the
title of the next section in Lonergan’s address.\(^89\) A judgment of value is an answer to a
question for deliberation. That is, it is either an assessment of whether something is
either truly or only apparently good, or it is a comparison of particular goods that ranks
one above the other. For example, I could decide that it is good for me, in my present
situation, to buy a new car. In that case, I would be judging that purchasing the legal

\(^{87}\) Lonergan, “Horizons,” 16.

\(^{88}\) See *Method in Theology*, 104-105.

\(^{89}\) Lonergan, “Horizons,” 16.
right to possess a new car, for me in my situation, is truly worth while (not merely apparently). However, I could concurrently judge that my giving money to the poor is also truly worth while. In this case, not being a person of unlimited wealth, I would have to choose between two particular goods: do I use my available resources to buy a car, or do I allocate those resources altruistically. The moral assessment, the judgment of value, in this case would be constituted by my assessment of which particular good outweighs the other.

Whether my judgments of value will tend to be valid depends, in Lonergan’s estimation, on the correctness of my understanding of the world and the human condition in combination with the extent of my moral development as a person. The extent of one’s understanding of the world makes a difference for whether one regularly makes valid moral assessments. To make a well-informed moral choice in the above example, I would have to take into account my need for a car to earn a living, provide for my family and be able to be generous in the future, as well as the grievous state of those in poverty and alternatives to owning a car such as available mass transportation. Lacking knowledge of the world and the human condition, if I choose well, it is only a random occurrence and nothing that can be counted upon in the future.

Knowing the world well and rightly valuing it, however, are two different things. I could judge it best to drive my new car past a homeless shelter and a bus stop every day. And, in certain situations, it might be right to do so; a judgment of value is required. Regularly to judge rightly in moral deliberation requires not just the attainment of knowledge but also the development of virtue. “To say that an affirmative judgment of
value is true is to say what objectively is or would be good or better.”90 Such objectively true judgments will only be obtained regularly by a person who, having knowledge, is also morally well-developed.

Going between the judgments of fact (my knowledge of the world and the human condition) and the judgments of value (my assessment of right and wrong, of good, better and best) are the apprehensions of value given in feelings (intentional responses to value). To be morally well-developed means, in part, that one’s feelings respond in a way that is adequate to true value:

Apprehensions of value occur in a further category of intentional response, which greets either the ontic value of the person or the qualitative value of beauty, of understanding, of truth, of noble deeds, of virtuous acts, of great achievements. For we are so endowed that we not only ask questions leading to self-transcendence, not only can recognize correct answers constitutive of intentional self-transcendence, but also can respond with the stirring of our very being when we glimpse the possibility or the actuality of real self-transcendence.91

Well-educated feelings respond to other people as ontic values, as “Thou’s” in “I-Thou” relationships. Well-educated feelings respond stronger and more positively to those particular goods that are actually of more value. They provide the motivation that assists in rightly valuing the various aspects of reality. This stirring, this motivation, arises from the response of our entire persons to value. They reveal us in, and reveal to us, the real world.

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90 Lonergan, “Horizons,” 16. The discussion of how one achieves such objectively true judgments, what it means that one does, is the subject of Insight. A brief discussion of it will occur in my chapter on the conversions, in my account of intellectual conversion.

As stated here, Lonergan considered that judgments of value provide an impetus toward real self-transcendence.\(^9^2\) Real self-transcendence occurs when we know the good and actually choose it. In the language of the chart in *Method*, it is the achievement of terminal value. It is our discovering ourselves, our constituting ourselves, as moral beings. Real self-transcendence is a discovery because we learn that beyond our knowledge of good and evil we are capable of choosing either one. It is constitutive in that through the choices we actually make, we constitute ourselves as either authentic or inauthentic people. Personal value and personal responsibility, thereby, become terms of significance and moment.

To have a horizon means to have the possibility of self-transcendence. One is able to know what is real and love what is good in real self-transcendence. In the self-determination of these choices, in actually knowing and choosing, one experiences liberty.\(^9^3\)

Because of the horizontal constitution of our self-transcendence, however, there exist qualitatively different exercises of liberty. In a horizontal exercise of liberty, one acts within the framework of one’s present horizon and from the standpoint of an already given existential stance. One’s liberty is real, but expressed in choices available to one without dramatic change. To use Piaget’s terms, in horizontal exercises of liberty, adaptation is accomplished through assimilation or through relatively minor accommodations. To go back to the terms relevant to emergent probability, the

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\(^9^3\) Lonergan, *Method*, 50.
probability schedules that express the direction of one’s life change only gradually, if at all. Life operates relatively as usual.

However, one’s horizon can move and change. It can be elevated and transformed. In a vertical exercise of liberty, one selects one’s existential stance and the corresponding horizon. One becomes an originating source of value, choosing the framework for the exercise of one’s liberty. A major accommodation is required. The probability schedules that constitute one as an incarnate act of meaning come to operate according to a new principle, leading to the transformation of oneself and one’s personal relations. Rather than living relatively as usual, a revolution has occurred.

In this process of existential self-constitution, feelings also play a part. Just as well-educated feelings motivate us toward knowing the good, they also motivate us toward choosing it. “In such vertical liberty, whether implicit or explicit, are to be found the foundations of the judgments of value that occur. Such judgments are felt to be true or false insofar as they generate a peaceful or an uneasy conscience.” The motivation for real self-transcendence is the existing or possible good. As our feelings become more refined, better educated toward true value, we are more and more drawn toward becoming or choosing that good.

Beyond any such motivating factors, however, the self-transcendence we actually achieve through our exercise of liberty becomes our authentic or inauthentic being in the


95 Lonergan, “Horizons,” 19. Here again one is reminded of Newman. Note that for Lonergan, as for Newman, one’s actually existing conscience is the result of a number of factors and must be trained and refined before it is a reliable guide to true values. “But a rounded moral judgment is ever the work of a fully developed self-transcending subject or, as Aristotle put it, of the virtuous man.” Lonergan, ibid.
world. Real self-transcendence is the living enactment of rightly considered moral decisions. It is the authentic being in the world of the horizontally and hierarchically constituted human being.

**Sublation**

Horizons, and things in different horizons, can function relative to each other in relations of sublation. As I stated in chapter one, Lonergan saw sublation as the incorporation of a reality into a new, broader or higher, reality or context in a way that de-centers the former reality but, paradoxically, makes it more itself. Throughout this chapter, whether discussing the hierarchical ordering of “things,” the structure of the human good, vertical finality, the vertical exercise of liberty, or the way marriage incorporates even the most natural realities of our organisms on a journey to heaven, I have implicitly spoken of sublation. Sublation attempts to speak of the purifying and elevation of lower reality by higher reality in a way that is less spatially defined than vertical finality; the two terms are genetically related, with sublation being the more developed and comprehensive.  

Karl Rahner

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In modern philosophical discourse, the discussion of sublation (or suspension) has roots in the logic of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.\textsuperscript{98} While having Hegel, of course, in mind, Lonergan preferred the sense Karl Rahner gives to this topic.\textsuperscript{99} In *Hearers of the Word*, Rahner discusses sublation (or suspension) while defining the possible and proper existence of a Christian philosophy.\textsuperscript{100}

On Rahner’s interpretation, a truly Christian philosophy will not obliterate the boundary between philosophy and theology. Both theology and philosophy have their own proper concerns and methods, though the two are related. Philosophy only tries to philosophize; it does not attempt to become or supplant theology by taking revelation as its key, by expecting to be preserved from error supernaturally, or by taking the problems set by theology as its basis.

What a true Christian philosophy does do, however, is prepare itself to be baptizable. In the outworking of its problems, it its exploration of being, in its search for goodness and truth, philosophy must always be mindful of the possibility of our receiving a revelation from God. This possibility, that there is something beyond it (a revelation from God) that responds to its fundamental questions, must be incorporated into the center of Christian philosophy’s existence.

As Rahner puts it, “Philosophy is suspended, that is to say, it does away with itself by working itself out in its own field and destroying its own title to be the final


existential rationale of human existence.\textsuperscript{101} While, seemingly, Christian philosophy involves a negation of philosophy, that it is suspended in the theological means, paradoxically, that it is in fact preserved. Philosophy “dispenses with itself by elevating itself to a higher plane.”\textsuperscript{102} What is negated is philosophy’s prior claim to be an absolute master, completely sufficient in itself. What is preserved is philosophy itself, its central insights, function, and nature, because a philosophy that could not accept the possibility of a revelation, and then welcome that revelation gladly, would be turning away from the unreserved search for truth; a major avenue of humans’ possibly receiving truth would be denied a priori.

A philosophy that is not baptizable, then, would either be merely a set of technical discussions, logical exercises that would have no claim to discuss human life and existence, or it would be genuinely anti-Christian. A truly Christian philosophy, conversely, retains its character as a self-regulating discussion; that discussion, though, is transformed by an attitude of attentiveness in which the human existence it seeks to understand is an existence ready to receive revelation from God.\textsuperscript{103}

In Rahner’s text, it is ambiguous whether he saw himself as disagreeing with Hegel in a fundamental way. The distinction Lonergan wished to bring out, however, concerns the character of the negation that sublation implies. In one understanding of sublation, the sublated reality is abrogated by the sublating reality in a way in which the essence of the sublated reality no longer has a real existence of its own. It is probable

\textsuperscript{101} Rahner, \textit{Hearers of the Word}, 24.
\textsuperscript{102} Rahner, \textit{Hearers of the Word}, 24.
\textsuperscript{103} Rahner, \textit{Hearers of the Word}, 23.
that Hegel himself did understand sublation in this way. In the end, for Hegel, only the One really exists. The pen-ultimate realities are negated in a way in which they lose their fundamental distinction of identity; hence the charges of pantheism to which Hegel is subject.\footnote{See William Desmond, \textit{Hegel’s God: A Counterfeit Double?} Ashgate Studies in the History of Philosophical Theology (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).}

Rahner, to the contrary, accepted that sublation (or suspension) involves a negation. However, that negation is not of the sublated reality’s essential nature but rather of its self-understanding as being the final word. When true philosophy is suspended by Christian revelation, only philosophy’s false pride is lost—an egocentrism that actually works against philosophy’s highest good.

In sublation as Rahner conceives it, the lower reality is negated as being absolute. This negation, however, is a preservation, because the lower reality was not in fact absolute—sufficient unto itself and the last possible word on the subject. The true character of philosophy is brought out, in a much more glorious way, by an expectancy toward revelation; for, it is much more capable, then, of reasoning about humans as we actually are: those who wait upon the Lord to renew our strength.
theology is related but does not properly share, so that the relationship by which Christian philosophy is sublated into Christian theology does not involve a negation of philosophy’s essence (primary negation). Rather, it involves a negation of the illusion that philosophy can dispense with the possibility of theology, or that it can rightly be opposed to it or self-sufficient in a way that is closed. So a secondary negation negates philosophy’s claim to be the final word about human existence.

This secondary negation reveals the purifying nature of sublation. Of course, from within any later horizon, a number of aspects of a prior understanding may be seen to be mistaken simply because of advances in the sciences or in other avenues of human knowledge. When the prior understanding is incorporated in, or accommodated into the later horizon, one will certainly want to correct those former misunderstandings. However, some of the misunderstandings incorporated can involve the prior claim to be the final word. A philosophy that had been worked out on the basis of radical immanence would certainly undergo many changes when brought into a horizon constituted by transcendence. It might feel like the philosophy itself is being undone. However, its essential character as the human quest for meaning remains, as will any of its insights that are genuine achievements of the human spirit. What the sublating relationship will purify are its errors, the greatest of which is its putative status as the last word, whereas its genuine insights will be strengthened. If the philosopher can survive the transformation, she will be placed in an enhanced position to carry out her discipline.

Elevation

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105 One can profitably remember here Aquinas’ use of the literal celestial spheres in his theology of grace.
In this way, one can better understand Lonergan when he speaks of sublation as elevating and not negating.

I would use this notion in Karl Rahner’s sense rather than Hegel’s to mean that what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.\textsuperscript{106}

The sublated reality does not disappear into the sublating reality. The sublating reality genuinely is higher, more comprehensive, richer and fuller. Yet, it needs, depends on, the essence and proper function of the lower realities it sublates. The sublated reality does not lose its identity, but it is transformed by the addition of something new.

To give examples of sublation from the present chapter, consider first the relation of physics and chemistry in understanding my sister’s dog, Cody the Golden Retriever. Here, the sets of understandings characteristic of physics are sublated by the sets of understandings characteristic of chemistry. In explaining the operation of Cody’s digestive tract, the physicist can investigate the way the process follows the principles of quantum physics. Explaining why these particular sets of reactions happen in this particular context, however, is beyond the competence of a physicist \textit{qua} physicist, because from his perspective, the complex, structured and recurrent sets of operations are merely coincidental. A chemist, however, using the principles of organic chemistry may explain how digestive enzymes and acids use those physical principles to extract ready sources of energy from food. If the chemist can provide an explanation for what the physicist could not, he still needs the physicist’s quantum principles that are the building

\textsuperscript{106} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 241.
blocks of his own understandings. Far from negating the intrinsic value and nature of physics, the chemist draws on that science into a wider context.

Second, consider the relation of institutions and personal relations in the structure of the human good. As best I understand it, this relation is not itself a sublating relationship, but indicates a need in the whole structure for sublation into a wider horizon.

Frederick Lawrence observes the following in this regard:

Within the structure of the human good, Lonergan has brought out the differentiation of culture as the domain in which society reflects upon and appraises its way of life in distinguishing between the second and third levels [of the chart on the human good—SDC]. The second level regards the social dimension of the human good, the concretely verifiable way of life as embodied in laws, technology, economy, polity, family life; the third level comprises the cultural domain in the light of which the social is (to be) judged and evaluated.107

Thus, the third level (liberty, orientation, conversion, personal relations, terminal value) provides a functional norm by which the realities of the second level (plasticity, perfectibility, development, skill, institution, role, task, good of order) are known to be real or good.

By this analysis, institutions (for example, a city’s government) exist as the way in which human cooperation becomes structured by specialized roles and ordered by sets of tasks. However, from the standpoint of classic political philosophy, this government exists in order to further the right formation of personal relationships; governments exist to foster human friendship. When human friendships are being fostered, cooperation is at its finest and the roles and tasks of the institution empower the formation of a good of order that is truly good.

107 Frederick Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 252, emphasis original, except for my explanatory comment in brackets.
Without this normative ordering by the third-level call for personal relations, when the government is made an end unto itself, “the greater good” becomes a demonic thing. Marginalized people groups, for example, far too easily become impediments to the good of the State. When our institutions are ordered by the norm of personal relations, then our institutions find their true and best function. When they are cut off from this norm, they lose their own true selves.

The relation here described by second and third order realities is not one of sublation. However, it raises the question of how the social force inherent in institutions can be prevented from drawing the institutions, once formed, from imperialistically becoming an ends in themselves. Manifestly, it has been difficult over time for governments truly to foster personal relations. What allows these realities Lonergan explains as constituting the human good to become rightly ordered and to stay that way once right order is achieved? Does not this entire order of things express need for sublation by a higher reality? For, a higher reality, in sublating the human good, could preserve the realities inherent in the human good, while placing them in a context that fosters the relations necessary for their right function.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined Lonergan’s understanding of the hierarchically ordered nature of the universe. It has been an examination of the ways in which Lonergan saw order as permeating the whole of reality. Proceeding from an examination of the concrete good, emergent probability, and “things,” with their explanatory genera,

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108 As one instance among many possible examples, consider the seed sown by the “Libertie, Égalitie, Fraternatie!” of the French Revolution, harvested in the totalitarianism of Bonaparte.
the chapter moved on to develop the structure of human reality as communicated through
the charts on marriage and on the human good. To understand the relations presented by
these charts, the chapter discussed horizons and sublation as two fundamental dynamics
that help us to understand the order that permeates the whole.

A further example of what Lonergan means by sublation included the need for the
human good to be sublated by a horizon transformed by a higher reality. This example,
as a matter of fact, has directly to do with the topic of this paper: the relation of religion
and morality in Lonergan’s later writings. I will, therefore, develop this relation at length
in chapter six. For, in the relation of religious conversion to moral and intellectual
conversion, Lonergan shows how such a sublation can in fact take place, based on the gift
of God’s love.

Prior to this examination, in which intellectual, moral and religious conversion
will be explained and related, I will examine what Lonergan meant by the order of the
supernatural (the higher horizon in question) and the way he conceived of sin. This.chapter has already implicitly mentioned the supernatural, but to understand Lonergan it
is necessary to see the way in which the human good looks for a transformation that
involves nothing less than a created participation in the divine nature (discussed in
chapter four); and to explain the privation and absurdity of sin that requires conversion
(discussed in chapter five).
Chapter 4

Faith and the Supernatural

In the last chapter, I discussed the ordering Lonergan saw in the constitution and conduct of the universe. As the chapter ended, I began to explain the need for this natural order to transcend itself. This chapter makes explicit the human need and capacity for ultimate self-transcendence.

The English poet John Donne, in his early work “The Good Morrow,” speaks of the transforming power of love:

I wonder by my troth, what thou, and I
Did, till we lov’d? were we not wean’d till then?
But suc’d on countrey pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the seaven sleepers den?
T’was so; but this, all pleasures fancies bee.
If ever any beauty I did see,  
Which I desir’d, and got, t’was but a dream of thee.¹

In this poem, Donne speaks of a new life occasioned by love. In comparison to the reality he has discovered with his beloved, his former life seems forgotten, immature, uncouth, idle, preternaturally asleep, illusory, a mere dream.

Lonergan similarly speaks of the transforming power of divine love to overcome our previous limitations. It is divine love that seeks us out and provides the new horizon in which self-transcendence can be healed and transcend the merely human. While the human good remains, everything becomes different once affected by God’s love.

Explaining this transformation move me toward completing the progression I began in the last chapter under horizons. For, Lonergan’s theology of human self-transcendence is not complete until the human has been brought into the horizon of

faith. In the horizon of faith, human reality becomes transformed through the knowledge born of religious love.

However, to understand better what Lonergan means by humans being brought into the horizon of faith, I will need to explore Lonergan’s earlier theology of the supernatural order. In his earlier metaphysical terms, human nature has an obediential potency toward a created participation in the divine nature. By exploring this perfection of nature by grace (especially as seen in *Grace and Freedom* and *De Ente Supernaturali*), I hope to explain what Lonergan means when, in the terms of transcendental method, he discusses faith and religious conversion.

**Faith and The Supernatural**

As mentioned in chapter one, Lonergan began his publishing career with a series of articles on Thomas Aquinas’ views on grace. Lonergan repeatedly taught about this subject. The textbook he composed for these classes (*De Ente Supernaturali*) has great similarity with the views he expounded in Thomas. However, Lonergan also deals directly with the viewpoints of later interpreters of Thomas while correcting inadequacies in Thomas’ theologizing. Despite this development and updating, Lonergan’s framework in *De Ente Supernaturali* remains that of faculty psychology.

In his later work, Lonergan continues to explore the reality of God’s grace. As I will discuss below, he considered religious conversion the fundamental reality of the sanctified life, a life that is lived within the horizon characterized by what he calls faith. In the horizon of faith, religious being-in-love comes to infiltrate, and perhaps even dominate, one’s existence in a way that affects one’s moral being. As characterized by his transcendental method, what Lonergan described in metaphysical
terms as the order of the supernatural becomes known through the being grasped by ultimate concern, through the idea of the Holy, through a consolation that comes from God, and through experiencing the call of mysterious love.

The Order of the Supernatural

Lonergan accorded the development of the theorem of the supernatural great importance. In his 1959 lectures to educators, Lonergan explained the way fields of study become describable as “science:” namely, discourse in the field becomes systematic. Before this point, discourse is occasional (about a particular subject because the occasion demands it), possibly productive of major insights, but lacking the one insight that gives unity to the field and allows previous and future theorems to be organized. Given that insight (for example, Newton’s theorems and demonstrations in mechanics, or Mendeleev’s organization of a periodic table of the elements in chemistry), the field of study is able to proceed as an organized system. Given the basic organization that flows from this ordering insight, the field of study comes of age.

Lonergan argued that that the ordering insight in theology was the development of the theorem of the supernatural. Specifically he credits Philip, Chancellor of the University of Paris in the thirteenth century, with providing a distinction whose importance would re-order medieval theology. This discovery is part of Philip’s *Summa de bono*, in which he deals with the ordering principle of the

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5 Philip did not make that discovery alone. He was part of a substantial history of advance. See Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 3-20.
good, and differentiates which goods are appropriate for human beings and which are appropriate for those whose natures surpass the human (such as angels). In this far-reaching discourse, Philip also seems to have given the earliest known discussion of the transcendentals (beauty, truth, the good) as convertible (only distinct in relation to us and our capacities).

The theorem of the supernatural describes natural and supernatural orders. First, the theorem of the supernatural is a theorem. It describes, in a theoretical way, a concrete set of realities; thereby it gives a scientific understanding of what had before been apprehended in every-day terms.

Second, it describes two orders. It selects a domain for analysis in theological discourse, an “entitative order of grace, faith, charity and merit that comes to us through Christ, that is known by faith, that is realized by charity, that is socialized in the mystical body which is the church.” But in selecting this domain it describes not one but two orders; for grace perfects nature, faith perfects reason, charity perfects ordinary human good will, and merit rises above any conception of ordinary human deserving.

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7 McClusky, “Philip the Chancellor.”

8 See Lonergan, Grace and Freedom, 15.


10 “Supernatural” can be used in more than one way. Strictly speaking, it can refer to the relation of any higher nature to a nature that is less than it. For example, the properly human activity of knowing the theorems of mathematics would be relatively supernatural with respect to Cody, the Golden Retriever. Cody’s nature is not proportionate to the reflective acts of knowing that are required for mathematics, and if he did somehow show a grasp of Euclid, one would be quite amazed. A miracle, it seems, would be required. Besides this relative use of natural and supernatural, there is also
Before the distinction of the supernatural order, it was difficult to give any positive validity to a natural order. Augustine’s relentless posing of the Apostle’s question, “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” has but one answer: Nothing.\(^\text{11}\) Philip did not change this answer, but the distinction of the order of the supernatural allows a differentiation between that which we are by being created (a domain in which human freedom can have a place, given an originating work of grace) and that which we are by being saved (a domain that does not abrogate human freedom but that depends on operative and cooperative habitual and actual grace). While all contingent being exists in relation to God depends upon God, Lonergan argues that theology properly deals with the supernatural.\(^\text{12}\) Intrinsically, theology regards the healing, elevation and perfection of the natural by the supernatural.

Aquinas argued that the knowledge we have of the supernatural order proceeds analogically from the knowledge we have of the natural order. For example, when Aquinas discusses the theological virtue of charity, he does so using the analogy of human friendship.\(^\text{13}\) Charity is the friendship of humans with God that exists imperfectly in our present life but shall be perfect in heaven. It is created in the human soul by God as a habitual form superadded to the natural ability of the soul to have or express friendship.\(^\text{14}\)

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\(^\text{12}\) Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 242.

\(^\text{13}\) Aquinas, ST II-II 23.1, adapting and augmenting Aristotle’s discussion of friendship from the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}.

\(^\text{14}\) Aquinas, ST II-II 23.2.
In “Finality, Love, Marriage,” Lonergan uses Aquinas’ technique, but with a significant difference. As mentioned in the previous chapter, while the medieval theologians spoke of the order of grace perfecting the order of nature, Lonergan outlines three levels in which the perfection occurs (the level of nature, the level of reason and the level of grace). Just as the friendship of the married couple perfects their organistic sexual union, so the habit of charity perfects normal human friendship.

Thus, even in this early stage of his writing, Lonergan was thinking about the reality of grace in terms of a dynamic. There is an analogy, or structural similarity, between the order of grace and the orders of nature and reason, not just in the entities involved but in the way those entities are interrelated. For what is analogous in Lonergan’s three-stage breakdown is not just human friendship and charity, but rather the effect that the friendship of marriage has on human sexual union and the effect that the habit of charity has on ordinary human friendship. To refer back to the charts, the analogies extend to the arrows, and the dynamics of change they express, and not merely in the entities represented by words.

As Lonergan says concerning sanctifying grace in De Ente Supernaturali, “There exists a created communication of the divine nature, which is a created, proportionate, and remote principle whereby there are operations in creatures through which they attain God as he is in himself.” Michael Stebbins helpfully explains this sentence in The Divine Initiative, and I do not intend to repeat his work. In order to understand Lonergan’s later grace theology, however, I will examine a few key aspects of this amazing thesis.


16 Lonergan, De Ente Supernaturali, 1.4. “Exsistit creatæ communicatio divinae naturæ, seu principium creatum, proportionatum et remotum quo creaturæ insunt operationes quibus attingitur Deus uti in se est.”
First, Lonergan describes a created communication. “Created” implies that it is both finite and contingent, for such is true of all created reality.\textsuperscript{17} Coherent with the long Christian tradition of divinization (\textit{theosis}), Lonergan never implies that humans become the divine essence.\textsuperscript{18} Rather, humans by grace receive a communication of that essence.

This created reality is a communication. When considered together with Thomas’ discussion of charity and grace, one is reminded again of Aristotle’s discussion of friendship. When speaking of charity, Thomas argues as follows:

Accordingly, since there is a communication between man and God, inasmuch as He communicates His happiness to us, some kind of friendship must needs be based on this same communication, of which it is written (1 Corinthians 1:9): "God is faithful: by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son." The love which is based on this communication, is charity: wherefore it is evident that charity is the friendship of man for God.\textsuperscript{19}

The mutuality that Aristotle argues is necessary for friendship is not abrogated. In Jesus Christ, what Aristotle thought impossible has happened; a true friendship has come into existence between a human being and God.\textsuperscript{20} Given the revelation of Jesus Christ, Aquinas argues that God communicates God’s happiness to us in a way that this communicated happiness must form the basis for “some kind of friendship.”

In \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, Lonergan defines “communication” as “that by which something becomes common or shared, which otherwise would be proper (not common, restricted to itself).”\textsuperscript{21} In other words, by grace, something which is appropriate or natural for God becomes appropriate or natural for us.

\textsuperscript{17} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.7.

\textsuperscript{18} See, for example, Athanasius, \textit{On the Incarnation of the Word} 54.3.

\textsuperscript{19} Aquinas, ST II-II 23.1.

\textsuperscript{20} See Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 8.7.

\textsuperscript{21} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.7.
Thomas’ theology, what is communicated to us is “happiness.” But happiness is virtue in action.\textsuperscript{22}

In order for action according to the virtue of charity to be natural and volitional for us, or belief according to the virtue of faith, Aquinas argued that some habitual form must be superadded to our human nature.\textsuperscript{23} Action according to the virtue of charity is action according to the divine wisdom and goodness, and thereby one may see that it exceeds what is expected of or even possible for a human will (that is, what is proportionate to it).\textsuperscript{24} What is communicated is not each individual loving action that springs from charity, nor each individual belief that is accepted by faith, for that would involve God’s controlling the human will and intellect in a way that seems violent and contrary to the possibility of human freedom. Rather a new, foundational, way of knowing and choosing is communicated—something that changes human nature or becomes second nature to it.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[22] See Aquinas, ST II-II 23.3.
\item[23] Aquinas, ST II-II 23.2; ST II-II 4.1.
\item[24] Lonergan defined “proportionate” as “in accordance with the law of natural proportion,” or “involving parity of relations.” Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.7.
\item[25] Lonergan defined “principle” as “that which is first in any order.” Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.5. A remote principle is one which gives rise to the proximate principles in which the operations themselves are received. \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.7. In this analysis, faith and charity are communicated as a proximate pairing that express an underlying (remote) principle of sanctifying grace. Lonergan’s states the following in \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.14:
\begin{quote}
Materially, substance and nature are the same; formally, nature differs from substance in that nature is substance not simply as substance but as the remote proportionate principle relative to operations. Similarly, there is material identity but formal diversity between sanctifying grace and the created communication of the divine nature within us. For this created communication is sanctifying grace not simply as such but inasmuch as it is the remote proportionate principle of the operations by which we attain God as he is in himself.
\end{quote}
Hence the disputed question whether sanctifying grace and the habit of charity are really distinct does not affect the substance of our treatment but only the way in which the matter is presented. It does not affect the substance of the doctrine, for all Catholic schools of thought admit a created communication of the divine nature; but it does influence the manner of presentation, inasmuch as different authors arrange the matter differently in order to expound it in an intelligible way. Because of the “material identity,” my discussion above has sometimes spoken of the created communication, or sanctifying grace, or the habit of charity. Lonergan’s discussion is exact, although
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
This foundational, new, way of knowing and acting is constituted by “operations in creatures through which they attain God as he is in himself.”\textsuperscript{26} That the communication is of a principle productive of operations is consonant with Thomas’ description of a communication of happiness (virtue in action). This principle constitutes the “something” by which humans start to be part of the life of God. The particular operations Lonergan describes are faith, hope and charity. In faith, humans come to believe truths that are out of the proportion of human intelligence (or any created intellect).\textsuperscript{27} In hope, humans come to be directed toward a good that is absolutely supernatural (namely the life of heaven, which is not in proportion to any human good, but far exceeds it).\textsuperscript{28} In charity, humans come to make choices in a way that is proportionate to the divine goodness.\textsuperscript{29}

Here, as in “Finality, Love, Marriage,” grace is a dynamic of change. Lonergan’s description of the created communication (which is materially the same as sanctifying grace) as a principle should not lead one to see it as a static reality. Rather, it is a moving reality, the most moving reality, in that it is productive of the greatest movement possible in human beings.

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the point of a remote principle does need to be worked with especially carefully (see Stebbins, \textit{Divine Initiative}, 143-149). It seems to me appropriate to use these materially identical realities to learn about each other, although the formal distinctions are important within the context of \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}. How these distinctions (especially between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity) are translated into Lonergan’s later theology is a matter of dispute, and I will discuss that briefly below under religious conversion.

\textsuperscript{26} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.4.

\textsuperscript{27} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.46.

\textsuperscript{28} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.47.

\textsuperscript{29} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.9. See also Lonergan, \textit{Grace and Freedom}, 353, in which the virtue of charity is compared with the virtue of justice.
That humans would come to participate in a blessedness that rightfully belongs only to God seems impossible. Yet, Lonergan argues that since one can know by revelation that the blessed in heaven experience exactly that, it must be possible for human nature. However, one must still account for the fact that this happiness (the blessedness of the beatific vision and the life of charity in the world to come) is disproportionate to human nature. Although humans by nature could desire this ultimate blessedness, its achievement is beyond human nature’s ability.

Lonergan understands this paradoxical state of affairs through using the notion of obediential potency. Humans must have the capacity to receive (that is, passive potency toward) the blessedness of the divine life. If not, there could be no reception of it; but, by revelation, we know that at least some humans will receive this greatest happiness. However, actuating that potency is something that no human being has the ability to do (for it is not proportionate to human nature). To actuate a passive potency toward participation in the divine nature is proper only for the divine nature itself (no other nature is proportionate to the divine nature). Therefore, for the human capacity for eternal happiness to become actual requires the action of God. Hence, the potency is obediential, in that it can be actuated by God alone.

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30 Hence, Aristotle’s denial of the possibility of friendship between humans and God.

31 See Lonergan’s discussion of natural beatitude in De Ente Supernaturali, 2. For a discussion of the similarities and differences between Lonergan and Henri de Lubac on this issue, Stebbins, Divine Initiative, 178-182.

32 Lonergan, De Ente Supernaturali, 1.57-64.

33 See 1 Corinthians 13:8-13, 2 Peter 1:4 and 1 John 3:2, among many others.

34 This fact is knowable by revelation (for example, Ephesians 2:1-10), but also by the reasonable argument that only a nature in act as the absolutely supernatural essence could actuate the passive potency of a non-supernatural essence to achieve the absolutely supernatural essence, even in a created participation (an effect cannot exceed its cause).

35 Lonergan, De Ente Supernaturali, 1.64.
In the actuation of this obediential potency, that which we naturally desire, but which is unattainable to us without divine help, becomes ours. The natural desire to see God by God’s essence is fulfilled partially in this life by faith.\textsuperscript{36} Supernatural truth is grasped, but not directly. In faith, we know not what God is, but what God is like or what God is not. But faith will become sight in the beatific vision. The desire for the life of charity in the world to come is fulfilled imperfectly in this life by the gift of charity.\textsuperscript{37} The charity by which we now love is substantially the same as the charity with which we will love God in heaven; it is, however, incomplete here and will be completed there. That we shall attain this supernatural blessedness, and that it truly will be the fulfillment of all our desires, is the subject of hope.\textsuperscript{38} God’s promises, the foundation of our hope, will be replaced by possession of supernatural blessedness when faith becomes sight. All of these ultimately blessed realities are (or involve) operations that are proper to God, and not to humans. In attaining these operations the sanctified human attains participation in the life of God.\textsuperscript{39}

In explaining sanctifying grace in such intimate connection to the operations of our consciousness, Lonergan rejected a “purely entitative supernaturality.”\textsuperscript{40} If sanctifying grace were understandable as purely entitative, it would be deducible from revelation but apparent in no other way. One is reminded of Kant’s distinction of \textit{noumena} and \textit{phenomena}, in which sanctifying grace would be a numinous reality, revealed by God to us, but otherwise unknowable. However, Lonergan specifies and

\textsuperscript{36} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.46.

\textsuperscript{37} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.9.

\textsuperscript{38} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.47.

\textsuperscript{39} For a thorough analysis and explanation of the elevation of human nature, see Stebbins, \textit{Divine Initiative}, 212-252.

\textsuperscript{40} Lonergan, \textit{De Ente Supernaturali}, 1.56.
defends sanctifying grace as received in operations of the human subject that are knowable. Grace, according to Lonergan, is at least partially experiential. In fact, it transforms the basis and operation of our knowing and choosing. It is the healing and elevation of our conscious operations.

The Horizon of Faith

In my last chapter, I discussed Lonergan’s explanation of self-transcendence as the possibility of horizon, intentional responses and values within the context of horizons and judgments of value within and among horizons. Having now discussed the order of the supernatural, it is time to complete the horizontal progression Lonergan envisaged. For, it is in the horizon of faith that human beings begin the ultimate self-transcendence given by divine love.41

Faith, according to Lonergan, is “the knowledge born of religious love.”42 Using more traditional (Scholastic) terminology, what he is referring to is identified as the light of faith, the light of grace, or infused wisdom—that precondition within the human consciousness that makes it possible to accept and live out the specific religious beliefs.43 As Lonergan puts it, “Besides the factual knowledge reached by experiencing, understanding and verifying, there is another kind of knowledge reached through the discernment of value and the judgments of value of a person in love.”44 Specifically, it is the discernment and judgment of transcendent value that result from the reception of the love of God.

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43 Lonergan, Method, 123.
44 Lonergan, Method, 115.
In both *Method* and “Horizons,” Lonergan begins his discussion of faith with Pascal’s famous reflection that the heart has reasons which the reason does not know.\(^{45}\) By “reason,” in this case, Lonergan understands the activities of experiencing, understanding and judging, all taken together. By “heart,” Lonergan here means the existential subject, in the act of deciding, characterized by “the dynamic state of being in love.”\(^{46}\) By “the heart’s reasons,” he means feelings that are intentional responses to value.\(^{47}\) He delineates two important aspects of these feelings here: first, that feeling is a recognition of value as such, absolutely, and second, that feelings guide us in choosing one value relative to another.\(^{48}\)

Lonergan’s contention that the apprehension of value occurs on the fourth level of intentional consciousness (the level of decision) is extremely important. One’s mind does not stop functioning in terms of experiencing—understanding—judging—deciding, but the apprehension of value Lonergan describes in the gift of love is not a result of this logical-ethical process. Lonergan, in this way, explains two exceptions to the medieval maxim that nothing is loved that is not first known. First, there is the minor exception of falling in love in the everyday sense; lovers rarely if ever reason themselves into the state of being in love with each other. Second, there is the major exception of human beings receiving the love of God, coming to be in love with God.\(^{49}\)


\(^{47}\) Lonergan, “Horizons,” 19.

\(^{48}\) Lonergan, “Horizons,” 19-20. Feelings as intentional responses were introduced in chapter three and will be more fully developed in chapter seven.

\(^{49}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 122-123.
In both cases, Lonergan denies that love is caused by the “reason” of experiencing—understanding—judging. The consequence (being in love) is disproportionate to the cause (it is greater than the “reason” contrasted with the “heart’s reasons” by Pascal), and cannot therefore strictly be a result of it. Both the minor and major exceptions must be in some sense gratuitous. In the minor exception, there is gratuitousness in an ordinary sense, for the love of human lovers is a gift that is proportionate to the acts of human consciousness. In the major exception, the gratuitousness is reflective of a cause disproportionate to this world, because no merely human operation of consciousness is proportionate to a love that transcends this world.

Faith is the gift of self-transcendence toward a reality beyond any possible human horizon. The reception of this gift of love leads to judgments of value that transform our previous scale of values, based on the reasons of the heart. “To our apprehension of vital, social, cultural and personal values, there is added an apprehension of transcendent value.”50 The fruit of this transformation in our hearts occurs in two ways: first, the question of God becomes a question of decision. “Will I love God in return, or will I refuse?” “Such is the basic option of the existential subject once called by God”;51 second, all other values are placed relative to transcendent value.52 Decisions I make with regard to myself and this world in which I live, if I accept God’s love, will be influenced by God’s love. The functioning of my consciousness is given a new vector—an orientation toward transcendent Good that is, who is, also transcendent Truth.

50 Lonergan, Method, 115.

51 Lonergan, Method, 116.

52 Lonergan, Method, 116.
Lonergan argues that this apprehension of value is immediate.\textsuperscript{53} However, understanding what Lonergan means by “immediate” and “mediated” is essential. Especially, one must pay careful attention to what it would mean to have meanings mediated to one or values immediately apprehended, and how these realities interact with each other.

We do experience a world of sensory impressions and experiences, of feelings and pleasures and pains. In this “world of immediacy,” what is seen is present to the seeing, what is heard is present to the hearing, and so forth concerning the data of sense. With respect to the data of consciousness, pleasures and pains and motivations are present to the one experiencing them. This is the world known by biological extroversion, and it is present to us as long as we are in some way conscious and bodily beings.

Yet this world of immediacy is only a small fragment of the world in which adult human beings live. As language, symbol, and memory develop in us, we enter a “world mediated by meaning.”\textsuperscript{54} In the world mediated by meaning, experiencing plays only a part. On the basis of experience, we come to various understandings of what is experienced. We assess these possible understandings, and a judgment of what is possible or probable or certain is reached. On the basis of this judgment, we try to make decisions about how to live. The world of biological extroversion is transcended by the drive of wonder.\textsuperscript{55}

In this vastly larger world of meaning live the practical wisdom of our communities, the investigations of scholars and scientists, the meditations of

\textsuperscript{53} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 112-113.

\textsuperscript{54} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 28.

\textsuperscript{55} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 22.
philosophers and theologians, the living wisdom of the saints.\textsuperscript{56} In it also are the great web of interlocking meanings that constitute our hopes and fears, our relationships and our daily lives. It is what we refer to when we speak about the real world.

As stated above, the apprehension of value that makes possible for one the horizon of faith is immediate. As Lonergan puts it,

Faith, then, subsists and is propagated on a level quite beyond philosophy, or history, or human science; they are the work of Pascal’s reason, of experiencing, understanding, and judgment. But faith is the eye of otherworldly love, and the love of God itself is God’s gift; it is on the level of feelings, values, beliefs, actions, personal encounters, community existence, community action, and community tradition.\textsuperscript{57}

Faith begins in the immediate apprehension of value conveyed by feelings. But it does not stay there. It transforms one’s whole living. It is capable of transforming one’s community, indeed, of turning the world upside down.

While Lonergan explains faith as materially identical with what medieval scholasticism referred to as infused wisdom, he also adverts to the more traditional aspect of faith that includes assent to religious beliefs. The Word of God—the communication of God’s saving meaning to human beings—for Lonergan has two parts. One is the historical, symbolic, artistic and verbal carriers of divine meaning.\textsuperscript{58} The pinnacle of this type of word is the work of language in Scripture, in worship and prayer, in celebration and preaching. It operates within the world mediated by meaning. The Gospel is the real world mediated to us through meanings.

The other type of word, though, “is the prior word God speaks to us by flooding our hearts with God’s love. That prior word pertains … to the world of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 28.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Lonergan, “Horizons,” 21.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 118-119. Lonergan refers to this outer, historical, word as “religious beliefs.”
\end{itemize}
immediacy, to the unmediated experience of the mystery of love and awe.”59 This inner word is the work God does in our minds and hearts that prepares us and makes us able to accept God’s message.60 It is God’s work in us that changes our hearts of stone to hearts of flesh and that makes us able to receive God’s perfect law.

This second word, in Lonergan’s understanding, occurs in the gift of faith. To use Newman’s words, “Cor ad cor loquitur.” Literally translated, “Heart speaks to heart,” Lonergan interprets this phrase as “Love speaks to love, and its speech is powerful.”61

This gift of faith, and its reception, fulfill instead of abrogate human freedom.62 There is a primary moment in this process of operative grace. God acts, and we enjoy it. We cannot turn our hearts of stone to flesh on our own because, among other things, we do not want to do so. However, the human subject retains the choice whether to receive this gift gladly or to flee from it. And, the maturing of this gift will require years of cooperating with God’s grace.

Additionally, the gift of faith, though occurring immediately in individual human hearts, occurs both socially and historically. The same gift of faith can occur to many, and can shape concrete communities that develop, produce traditions, and endure over time.63 To these communities, as to the gift of faith itself, one can be either authentic or unauthentic, and these two requirements for authenticity can sometimes conflict.

59 Lonergan, Method, 112.

60 See Lonergan, Verbum, 13-29, for Lonergan’s explanation of the natural inner word in Aquinas. In Method, the inner word is the supernatural communication of God to our hearts.

61 Lonergan, Method, 113.

62 Lonergan, Method, 117.

Beyond the historical nature of communities gathered together based on an inner word of grace, it is also possible for God’s grace radically to become historical. The “divine initiative,” as Lonergan explains it, can make a personal entrance into human history.64 Lonergan puts it this way:

Then faith takes on a new dimension. It remains the power of total loving to reveal and uphold all that is good; it retains the bond that unites the religious community in mutual recognition, that directs their common judgments of value, that pursues their beliefs. But it now becomes harkening to the word of Emmanuel, of God-with-us. The history and origins and developments become doctrine as well as narrative; faith is also belief. As a subject grasped by ultimate concern can discern others similarly grasped, so too it can discern God’s expression of his total love.65

As stated in his earlier grace theology, the hypostatic union is the primary instance of grace in the world.66 In Jesus Christ, and in his Spirit, God is come into the world. In this event, the inner word of God’s grace finds its perfect counterpart in the Word, the incarnate divine self-revelation.

Transition from a Metaphysical to a Transcendental Context

In terms of Lonergan’s earlier theology of grace, faith (infused wisdom) is the actuation of an obediential potency. To have knowledge of something requires knowing it with a truly sufficient basis for judgment. Faith is a particular kind of knowledge, being the basis for judgments concerning divine truth. In particular, it involves both judgments of value and judgments of fact that proceed from divine illumination as their sufficient basis. That such judgments of value and fact exist indicate that they are possible (a potency). Their character demonstrates that they are

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66 Lonergan, De Ente Supernaturali, 1.12.
obediential, that is, proceeding from divine illumination, drawing the human subject to make correct judgments concerning divine reality, and rightly to re-value this world relative to that divine value.

The actuation of obediential potency, however, had to do with the addition of habit to human nature as a kind of second nature. Lonergan’s later theology does not proceed in terms of habit, as I showed in chapter two. Rather, the notion of skills has replaced habit, namely sets of operations of consciousness that are not an addition to consciousness but a development of consciousness.

Skills develop in horizons. In Piaget’s terms, when a child has entered the concrete operational stage, the child develops the skill of recognizing conservation of matter. The reasons for this movement, according to Piaget, are biological, cognitive and psychological.\(^{67}\) Lonergan discusses this movement from stage to stage in terms of horizon. “Horizons, finally, are the structured resultant of past achievement and, as well, both the condition and the limitation of further development. They are structured. All learning is, not a mere addition to previous learning, but rather an organic growth out of it.”\(^{68}\) By our horizons, not only our possible dispositions of care are structured but also what is possible for us to assimilate.\(^{69}\)

In faith, then, the obediential potency of human subjectivity is actuated in such a way as to bring the operations of human consciousness within a horizon characterized by the knowledge born of religious love. Within this new horizon, new sets of skills are rendered possible or even probable. When one remembers that

\(^{67}\) See Jean Piaget, “Extracts from Piaget’s Theory” in *Cognitive Development to Adolescence*, ed. by Ken Richardson and Sue Sheldon (Hove, East Sussex: Open University, 1988), 12.

\(^{68}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 237.

\(^{69}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 237.
Lonergan translated the great weight of the medieval development of habit into skills, the momentous nature of this change can be seen.

A probability schedule has been enacted that makes probable for human consciousness to operate according to the pure pursuit of the transcendental notions (value and being) in a way that is characteristic of the divine goodness and wisdom. As Lonergan puts it in *Grace and Freedom*, the statistical law of choosing rightly characteristic of a fallen human is replaced by the statistical law appropriate for an angel.70 The gift of faith has brought about a change that is entitative in that we are an incarnate set of meanings, and that in the horizon of faith these meanings develop according to the divine wisdom and goodness. Because our operations of consciousness have been transformed by an apprehension of transcendent value, we have become participants in (imitators of) the divine wisdom and goodness. We have become friends of God. In a created communication that transforms the operation of our consciousness, we have received the life of God.

In faith, then, we receive a created communication of supernatural life. But, in the terms of Lonergan’s later theological method, what is the supernatural? As I discussed in chapter two, metaphysics in the later Lonergan is a tertiary discourse. Based on cognitive theory (What am I doing when I am knowing?), one proceeds to epistemology (Why is that knowing?). Thence, one can fruitfully proceed to metaphysics (What am I knowing?). By generalized empirical method, Lonergan

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70 Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 48. Lonergan here goes on to say, “Man endowed with the virtues becomes an agens perfectum and, for the most part, does what is right; thus a will adorned with the virtue of justice performs just deeds with the spontaneity and regularity with which fire moves upwards.” One challenge in understanding Lonergan’s analysis here is how one might understand a statistical law as applied to the angels, who in Thomas’ understanding are aeviternal. In that aeviternity exists as a mean between eternity and time, the temporal sequence of “before” and “after” (seemingly necessary for a statistical law to operate) would apply only as the aeviternity of the angels recedes from eternity toward time. Thomas says, “The same applies to the angels, who have an unchangeable being as regards their nature with changeableness as regards choice; moreover they have changeableness of intelligence, of affections and of places in their own degree” (ST I 10.5).
methodically grounds metaphysics in a verifiable way. One can verify one’s own cognitive processes, and therefore a metaphysics based on those verified processes can itself be stable and verifiable.\footnote{Having spoken of the need for the foundations of hermeneutics and critical history to be worked out, Lonergan says the following: Secondly, let me note that the metaphysics I would envisage would not be a philosophic first. It would be derived from epistemology and cognitional theory, and these in turn would be formulations of one’s personal experience of one’s own cognitional operations. In this fashion, philosophy and the root of theological method would come out of the personal experience of the thinker and it would evoke the personal experience of those to whom he speaks or for whom he writes. This intention of Lonergan’s is in a way reminiscent of Aristotle’s expectation that a well-educated person would recognize the person of practical wisdom. Bernard Lonergan, “Philosophy and Theology,” in Second Collection, 204. However, Lonergan’s intention is more general. Lonergan believed that any person who experiences a world, has insights that help her come to different understandings of that world, makes choices among those understandings that are not random but are connected to sufficient reason, and tries to act responsibly on the basis of those choices has the potential to recognize this recurrent set of operations within herself. Training in intentionality analysis can greatly help such a person (any normally functioning adult human being) in recognizing and appreciating properly the structure of her consciousness. However, the key element remains the subject’s own appropriation of her experiences.} Because our cognitive operations in fact do operate with great stability in the pattern of experiencing—understanding—judging—deciding, that apparently paradoxical thing can be achieved: a verifiable philosophy that is based on personal experience, that depends on what is available to us in our inwardness, but that is not relativistic.

What does “the supernatural” look like, then, when transposed into a method that begins with personal experience? Lonergan found no paucity of reference in the data of consciousness toward something that he judged must be supernatural. In particular, he used the later psychology of Abraham Maslow, the theology of Rudolph Otto, the theology of Paul Tillich, and the spiritual exercises of Ignatius Loyola to ground this assessment.
Abraham Maslow

Faith, in Lonergan’s later theology, is a growth that results from the love of God. It develops within and conditions a new horizon that is constituted by the orientation of the human subject toward transcendent value. In discussing human growth, and especially growth that takes place within such an orientation, Lonergan refers to the later psychology of Abraham Maslow.

Maslow made his name as a psychologist with his 1954 work, *Motivation and Personality*, in which he proposed a hierarchy of human needs. However, Maslow published a significant revision of his earlier views in his 1962 work, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, and his 1964 work, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*. While aware of Maslow’s earlier work, Lonergan refers repeatedly to the later Maslow. The references to Maslow in *Method in Theology* are to Maslow’s later work, particularly *Toward a Psychology of Being*, and Lonergan noted that it “is of great importance to be aware of current corrections of earlier views.”

Lonergan, of course, does not make exclusive use of Maslow’s psychology. Also present is his discussions are the psychological theories of Carl Rogers, Carl Jung, Karen Horney, Wilhelm Stekel, O. H. Mowrer, Ludwig Binswanger, Rollo May

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77 Lonergan, *Method*, 284n8. See also 52n19 for Lonergan’s advertence to the change in Maslow’s psychology.
and Victor Frankl. In fact, Maslow himself referred to a “Third Force” in psychology, a broad movement of which he was a part. Lonergan refers to this third force as a component in a possibly-forming “Second Enlightenment.” I examine Maslow’s psychology here because Lonergan uses Maslow regularly when analyzing human growth, and the study of human growth has a very significant place in Lonergan’s heuristic definition of the supernatural.

In *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Maslow develops a psychology of what he calls “deficiency motivation” and “growth motivation.” Maslow began with a question of “What makes people neurotic?” In answering this question, Maslow made this striking assessment:

> The serious thing for each person to recognize vividly and poignantly, each for himself, is that every falling away from species-virtue, every crime against one’s own nature, every evil act, every one without exception records itself in our unconscious and makes us despise ourselves. … The net results ultimately are one or the other—either we respect and accept ourselves or we despise ourselves and feel contemptible, worthless, and unlovable. Theologians used to use the word “accidie” to describe the sin of failing to do with one’s life all that one knows one could do.

Psychological sickness, then, is a deficiency, or a falling-away, in which the human subject comes to lose or despise her own true self. It will truly only be known, then, by knowing psychological health. Maslow based this assessment on his empirical research, which included study of psychologically healthy individuals as well as the


82 Maslow, *Psychology of Being*, 5, emphasis original.
more usual studies of psychopathology. He did not consider his findings to invalidate many of the understandings of Sigmund Freud; however, it seemed to Maslow that Freud had supplied an understanding that applied to psychological sickness, while his own work incorporated those findings within a wider and more powerful understanding of psychological health.

Maslow identified the key dynamic within this dialectic of psychological sickness and health as the difference between deficiency motivation and growth motivation in the human subject. Deficiency needs are those characterized by the absence of their fulfillment bringing illness, their fulfillment preventing illness, the restoration of their fulfillment curing illness, and their fulfillment in certain situations being preferred by deprived persons to other satisfactions. For example, a boy severely lacking in positive regard and acceptance from his parents could develop a deficiency need for attention; this deficiency need, if prolonged, could be experienced by the child as a kind of death of self, and a neurotic construction or defense of a false self initiated. A person whose existence is characterized or dominated by seeking the fulfillment of deficiency needs is not a healthy person.

In a healthy person, there exists a motivational dynamic that is not characterized by the fulfillment of a deficiency. Maslow called this dynamic, “growth motivation.” Maslow connected the growing interest among psychologists in this type of motivation to continuing study in five fields: first, psychotherapy, in which the

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goals of therapy inevitably go beyond the mere removal of pain and anxiety and experience a positive pressure toward health; second, studies by Kurt Goldstein of soldiers who had received brain injuries in World War I, in which Goldstein found it necessary to invoke some concept of self-actualization to explain the physiological and psychological reorganizations of the injured soldier’s capacities; third, psychoanalysis, especially the work of Eric Fromm and Karen Horney as they found it necessary to understand neuroses as distorted impulses toward growth; fourth, studies of creativity that contrast the creative process in healthy and sick people and seem to call for a theory of growth and spontaneity; and fifth, studies in child psychology in that show children to enjoy growing and developing new skills and capacities (contrary to the Freudian views that envision children as resisting growth and change).89

Maslow observed the writers in these various groups as needing to employ some concept such as “growth, individuation, autonomy, self-actualization, self-development, productiveness, self-realization ….”90 He considered that all of these terms were roughly synonymous. Growth motivation is the motivation that accompanies and moves development toward this self-actualization.

Growth motivation is different from deficiency motivation in that its fulfillment does not result in a coming to rest.91 With a deficiency need (for example, hunger reflecting a lack of food or the aforementioned deprivation-based need for attention), when the need is satisfied its corresponding desire is decreased or eliminated. When growth motivation is satisfied (for example, by a child’s learning


90 Maslow, Psychology of Being, 24.

91 Maslow, Psychology of Being, 30-31.
to read or an author’s publishing a book), the subject experiences increased motivation toward fulfillment of the desire. There is a yearning to be wise or creative, a real human being. This growth does not seek elimination of a negative situation but is a continually motivating reward in itself.

Thus, a paradox results in growth oriented people. Maslow observes the following in this regard:

It is just this person, in whom ego-strength is at its height, who most easily forgets or transcends the ego, who can be most problem-centered, most self-forgetful, most spontaneous in his activities, most homonomous, to use Angyal’s term.92 Growth motivation, when it comes to characterize the individual, leads the individual to self-transcendence.

Such persons are involved in a dialectic of choosing between safety and growth. Maslow made a basic differentiation between people who choose pursuing safety and those pursuing growth. For those who choose safety, the hierarchy of needs described in his earlier work more or less still obtains; for those who chose to pursue growth, self-actualization becomes a possibility that is available to them as a motivating factor in all their pursuits of needs.93 The person in whom growth orientation dominates can exercise free choice in this matter: a lifelong series of situations in which the subject chooses to overcome fear, or not, and thereby to gain wisdom. The dominating characteristic of the healthy person in following this self-reinforcing growth motivation is delight.94

92 Maslow, Psychology of Being, 37.
93 Maslow, Psychology of Being, 97-98.
94 Maslow, Psychology of Being, 47.
Accompanying his study of psychological health, Maslow also investigated what he termed “peak experiences.” Maslow arrived at an understanding of peak experiences through surveys of college students, accounts of subjects in letters to him, and through surveying the literature of mysticism and religion. While some peak experiences are related to mystical experiences, others are related to more usual experiences, such as falling in love.

Peak experiences are exceptional experiences in which subjects describe reality as especially characterized by: truth, goodness, beauty, wholeness, aliveness, uniqueness, perfection, completion, justice, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, playfulness, self-sufficiency and meaningfulness. In these experiences, the subject’s attitude toward reality is characterized by:

Awe, love, adoration, worship, humility, feeling of smallness plus godlikeness, reverence, approval of, agreement with, wonder, sense of mystery, gratitude, devotion, dedication, identification with, belonging to, fusion with, surprise and incredulity, fear, joy, rapture, bliss, ecstasy, etc.

No single peak experience Maslow recorded evidenced all the characteristics that he lists. The list is a compilation of many peak experiences in which Maslow tries to give a broad view of the whole phenomenon. Neither do people always realize they are having peak experiences; in Maslow’s estimation, it is more common that they do not fully realize it. Maslow did not proceed from a developed religious point of

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97 Maslow, *Religions*, 91-94.
98 Maslow, *Religions*, 94.
100 See Maslow, *Psychology of Being*, 105.
view that would pre-define these experiences. Rather, they were the result of empirical inquiry; his inquiry into psychological health produced data that needed to be explained.

Peak experiences have an important place in Maslow’s later psychology. In his earlier *Motivation and Personality*, he had defined self-actualization as the highest step in the hierarchy of human needs. It was, as he defined it, characteristic of the normal, healthy person. In later study, though, he found that self-actualization occurs extraordinarily rarely and only in those over the age of sixty. In peak experiences, however, Maslow found that subjects often act in a self-actualized way, temporarily taking on the characteristics of self-actualized people. Maslow considered that in these episodes, the subject becomes “more truly himself, more perfectly actualizing his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being, more fully human.” Through peak-experience, whether the experience is recognized as such or not, a dynamic is introduced into the operation of the subject’s consciousness in which she acts in a more truly self-transcending way.

Lonergan uses Maslow’s findings in several important ways. First, Lonergan uses Maslow’s study of growth orientation to indicate a trajectory within observable human consciousness toward an absolutely transcendent good. Like Maslow, Lonergan begins his discussion of human reality (the structure of the human good)

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with a discussion of the human pursuit of needs.\textsuperscript{107} In growth motivation, the human subject is ordered toward an ever-increasing self transcendence.

As Maslow shows, the gains achieved by growth motivation are cumulative and recurrent, and also continually open to further development. Lonergan says the following in this regard:

The free thrust of the subject into new areas is recurrent and, as yet, there is no supreme value that entails all others. But at the summit of the ascent from the infantile bundle of needs and clamors and gratifications, there are to be found the deep set joy and solid peace, the power and the vigor, of being in love with God.\textsuperscript{108}

Within the present world, the horizon of faith is the summit and goal of growth motivation. This explanation reminds one of the fourth of Aquinas’ Five Ways to know whether God exists, in that the gradation of things points one toward an ultimate perfection.\textsuperscript{109} However, Lonergan’s use of Maslow retains its foundation in empirical and experiential human reality. Growth motivation describes a trajectory within human consciousness toward self-transcendence. Lonergan can use this trajectory heuristically to define the supernatural: the religious, or supernatural, or God, is the end term of that motivation toward self-transcendence, that toward which growth motivation points.\textsuperscript{110}

Second, peak experience, as Lonergan assesses it, has an ultimate reference to being in love with God.\textsuperscript{111} Not every peak experience is characterized by being in love with God, of course, but being in love with God is the summit of peak experience. Lonergan repeatedly noted Maslow’s assessment that rather than being

\textsuperscript{107} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 48.

\textsuperscript{108} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 39.

\textsuperscript{109} ST \textsc{i} 2.3


confined to a few mystics, peak experiences are common; however, the subjects who are having them may not recognize them as such.\textsuperscript{112} Similarly, being in love with God can work as an undertow in the operations of our consciousness.\textsuperscript{113}

Whether as an un-thematized experience, or as something reflected on and known, being in love with God influences the subject to act in a more self-transcending way.\textsuperscript{114} Because of being in love with God, a person who, in other terms, may have no right to expect healthy and self-transcending operations acts in a more healthy and self-actualized way. This dynamic underpins the ability of the existential human subject to follow the transcendental notion of value.\textsuperscript{115} In other words, being in love with God (realized or not) provides the basis upon which moral disinterest prevails and the subject is better able to pursue what is truly of value.

Third, self-actualization, the fruit of being shaped by the gift of the love of God, is not reserved for a special few. The dynamic state of being in love with God effects a transformation on the whole structure of the human good, in every aspect of human capacity to meet human need.\textsuperscript{116} It sublates the pursuit of lower needs, placing them in a wider and higher context.

Finally, as Maslow explains, self-actualization is not the only possibility available for us. We can choose fear or be dominated by shame. We can be


\textsuperscript{113} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 113. Part of the work of religious education is to help people to advert to, understand, and correctly assess the operations of their consciousness. For an analysis of mysticism approved of by Lonergan, see William Johnston, \textit{The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing: A Modern Interpretation} (New York: Desclee Company, 1967), as noted in Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 342n7.


\textsuperscript{116} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 114-117.
subjugated to our lower needs in a way that leads us away from being truly human. This choice is knowable as a deprivation, as a lack of health. In my discussion of human sinfulness, below, I will show how Maslow’s empirical/psychological definition of dehumanization (quoted above) is appropriated by Lonergan in a powerful way.

Religious Experience

While Lonergan uses Maslow’s psychology to form an empirical basis for a theology of the supernatural, when speaking directly of supernatural religious experience in *Method* he turns to Rudolph Otto, Paul Tillich and Ignatius Loyola.  

Religious experience in Lonergan’s early authorship is sometimes described as awareness of the supernatural, mystical experience, or “a dimension in human experience that takes man beyond the domesticated, familiar, common sphere, in which a spade is just a spade.”  

As mentioned in my first chapter, Lonergan somewhat brackets off religious experience in his early authorship but makes it central in his later work.

Some aspects of religious experience Lonergan discusses seem to be naturally present to human beings. He speaks of an “apprehension or notion of God” grasped by human subjects as they investigate the intelligibility of the universe and find it is not complete in itself.  

The enquiring human subject can thus experience God as either that which is lacking, that which they are seeking, or that which makes the

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world make sense when in some way found.\textsuperscript{120} This knowing can have a moral, existential dimension. The moral decisions and existential commitments in which the subject experiences real self-transcendence are themselves the first step on the path to the ultimate self transcendence of religion.\textsuperscript{121} While the knowledge obtained in this sub-religious self-transcendence is natural (that is to say, not supernatural), Lonergan believed such knowledge to be the result of and an experience of God’s grace.\textsuperscript{122}

What is the difference between a natural knowledge received by grace and supernatural knowledge, which is by definition dependent on grace? Perhaps the difference is that in the supernatural experience of God’s grace, the operations of the human subject’s consciousness have been elevated supernaturally—into the horizon of faith occasioned by the gift of God’s love—whereas in a natural knowing of God only the human subject’s natural potencies are being fulfilled.\textsuperscript{123} Even though this potency to know God naturally is effectively an obediential one, it is still distinct from the potency to know God by God’s essence (which is strictly supernatural). In the actuation of both of them, God is genuinely experienced, but the experiences and resultant effects on the human subject differ. The natural experience of God’s grace, for example, could move the operations of one’s consciousness toward expressing prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude; the supernatural, toward faith, hope and charity. One can question whether \textit{de jure} an un-fallen human being would require

\textsuperscript{120} See Lonergan, “The Natural Desire to See God,” 81-91, for one of his answers to the question of the natural desire to see God.

\textsuperscript{121} Bernard Lonergan, “Natural Knowledge of God,” in \textit{Second Collection}, 128-129.

\textsuperscript{122} Lonergan, “Natural Knowledge of God,” 133.

\textsuperscript{123} One has certain potential by being human, a created \textit{Imago Dei}; this is, of course, true about one due to God’s grace in creating that person. However, the work of God that saves one is distinct from the work of God that creates one.
God’s grace to achieve something like the cardinal virtues; however, *de facto*, we do need that help.\textsuperscript{124}

The religious experience in which Lonergan is mainly interested, however, is supernatural. With respect to supernatural religious experience, in his later authorship, Lonergan speaks of “being in love with God.”\textsuperscript{125} “Being in love with God,” according to Lonergan, will feature prominently below in my discussion of religious conversion. To begin to ground that discussion here, however, the experience of being in love with God seems to share the characteristics of Maslow’s peak experiences; in fact, it seems to be both sum and source of all peak experiences. Second, Lonergan uses the theology of Otto, Tillich and Ignatius to describe this supernatural religious experience.

**Rudolph Otto**

In *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolph Otto discussed the aspects of religion not strictly reducible to rational argument and doctrine.\textsuperscript{126} Otto analyzed a “numinous” reality, not reducible to the rational though not divorced from it, whose importance he believed to have been overwhelmed by dogma-centric Christianity.\textsuperscript{127} Otto spoke of “the Holy” as that which is the “innermost core” of every religion, without which no true religion could exist.\textsuperscript{128} Moral goodness is implied by the Holy, but this usage is

\textsuperscript{124} See Kanaris, *Philosophy of God*, 69-99, for a discussion of Lonergan’s development with respect to the doctrine of the natural knowledge of God, especially *vis-à-vis* religious experience.

\textsuperscript{125} Lonergan, *Method*, 105


\textsuperscript{127} Otto, *Holy*, 3.

derivative. In the Holy, we find an excess that cannot be captured by doctrinal formulations or moral regulations.

The Holy is the starting-point of discourse about God, and it is primarily an experience. It is a something, an \( X \), which we cannot of ourselves produce and which we cannot precisely explain to one who does not know it. But to someone who does know it, or who knows some allied experience, we can say:

Then we must add: ‘This \( X \) of ours is not precisely this experience, but akin to this one and the opposite of that other. Cannot you now realize for yourself what it is?’ In other words our \( X \) cannot, strictly speaking, be taught, it can only be evoked, awakened in the mind; as everything that comes ‘of the spirit’ must be awakened.

Thus, Otto postulated a “Something” that lies at the heart of all religion, something that makes interest in the religion make sense and which grounds an awakening in the person who experiences it. Otto thereby investigated “the feeling that remains when the concept fails.” In this feeling, Otto saw a trans-cultural foundation for discussing religion through the experience of feelings and the coordinated use of symbols. His definition of this “Something” is heuristic—we know it by feelings resulting from experiencing it, and the right concepts (which are useful but which will ultimately fail) are the ones guided by the grounding feelings.

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132 Otto, *Holy*, vii, emphasis original. In analyzing any attempt to use “feeling” to ground true religion, one of course thinks of Schleiermacher. Otto recognizes Schleiermacher’s monumental achievement but criticized him for making his analysis of feeling too limited. In Otto’s analysis, the feeling associated with the Holy exceeds the difference between relative and absolute dependence; also, it gives “creature-feeling” as a primary, not derived, experiential concomitant to the experience of the Holy. See Otto, *Holy*, 9-11.
Otto described the Holy, the object toward which these feelings are directed and which is productive of them, as *mysterium tremendum*. It is a mystery (*mysterium*), something concealed from us, beyond the grasp of our understanding, exceptional and unfamiliar. More than that, it is “wholly other;” to it our consciousness reacts with astonishment, wonder, even with a stupor, for it is outside of the limits of the “canny.” It is awe-ful (*tremendum*); for, before it we tremble, we know dread, we experience an exaltedness or superiority of the “uncanny.” This awe-fullness has an aspect of being overpowering (“*majestas*”), in which we know ourselves to be nothing before the numinous Other.

This awe-full mystery holds for us the powerful element of fascination. While it undeniably fills us with dread, it is concomitantly uniquely attractive. Filled with this powerful attraction, we work out ideas and concepts that try to put into words what fascinates us so. Hence, “Love, Mercy, Pity, Comfort” express the “religious bliss” of being captured by this fascinating mystery. “The Wrath of God” expresses the dread it holds for us. “Salvation” expresses the life transformed

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137 Otto, *Holy*, 20-21. It is in this aspect that Otto expresses consonance with Schleiermacher’s feeling of absolute dependence. However, he does insist that in religious experience as actually received/expressed, the feeling of creaturliness is primary, not secondary.
by this awe-full mystery. These words have meaning for the one who knows the experience of the Holy, for they take their primary meaningfulness from the feelings aroused by that experience. Hence, to one who has not met this *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*, or who has rejected it, such concepts make little sense and arouse even less interest.

Lonergan appropriates Otto’s insights within the horizon of transcendental method. The gift of God’s love, the core religious experience according to Lonergan, may be recognized for what it is, or it may not. Even if it is not recognized for what it is, the gift of God’s love is still present within consciousness in a powerful and transforming way. To the extent that this transforming religious experience is present but not known (that is, exerting an influence on the operations of the subject’s consciousness, but not appropriately grasped by a reflective act of understanding and judging), the religious experience is conscious, but not known. Lonergan refers to it as “an experience of the Holy, of Rudolph Otto’s *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*.”

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144 One is here reminded, again, of Maslow’s analysis of peak experiences.
145 Lonergan, *Method*, 106. Lonergan draws the key aspects of Otto’s analysis together in a paragraph from a 1969 address published as “Faith and Beliefs.” In this address, Lonergan is in dialogue with Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Lonergan here puts it this way:

Because that dynamic state [of being in love with God] is conscious without being known, it is an experience of mystery. Because it is being in love, the mystery is not merely attractive but fascinating: to it one belongs; by it one is possessed. Because it is unrestricted, unmeasured being in love, the mystery is other-worldly; it evokes awe. Because it is a love so different from the selfish self that it transcends, it evokes even terror. Of itself, then, inasmuch as it is conscious without being known, the experience of God’s love is an experience of the holy, of Rudolph Otto’s *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*.

Lonergan goes on to equate this same condition/experience with Tillich’s ultimate concern and with the consolation without a cause spoken of by Ignatius. Lonergan, “Faith and Beliefs,” 39.
Lonergan refers to the *mysterium fascinans et tremendum* as the “base and focus” for the changed life that results from being in love with God.\(^{146}\) Religious experience, at the supernatural level, has to do with this mystery. Because of changes in the attitudes of the subject resulting from engagement with that mystery, one sees the harvest of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).\(^{147}\)

Lonergan also maintains that it is the inner power of this supernatural religious experience that gives the outward forms of the religions their meaning. Human subjects who encounter the divine mystery, both individually and in congress, develop historically. Lonergan comments on this process,

> Only in so far as the temporal, generic, internal, divine can somehow be associated with or—in the language of the naïve realist—“projected” upon the spatial, specific, external, human, can an insight be had and expression result. So it is by associating religious experience with its outward occasion that the experience becomes expressed and thereby something determinate and distinct for human consciousness.\(^{148}\)

The outward occasions given meaning by the inward religious experience become known as hierophanies.\(^{149}\) Whether dealing with the polytheism of modern Shintoism, the reverence associated with some place in which the divine was met or manifest, or a personally met God (such as the God of Jacob, who wrestled and spoke with the Patriarch), it is the inner grace of the gift of love, received as the awe-full and fascinating mystery, that is expressed in the external terms.\(^{150}\)


\(^{150}\) Lonergan coordinates his assessment of this pan-religious core or foundation (being in love with God) with Friedrich Heiler’s work in the history of religions. See Lonergan, *Method*, 109, and Lonergan, “Faith and Beliefs,” 40-42 (nearly identical to the text in *Method*, but with an additional explanatory paragraph at the end). Lonergan’s position has been criticized at this point, and I will deal with that criticism, and some possible answers, below under religious conversion.
Paul Tillich

While Otto’s theology seems more fruitfully used by Lonergan than that of Paul Tillich, Lonergan does make some use of Tillich’s theological adaptation of Heidegger. With respect to Tillich, Lonergan references “being grasped by ultimate concern.”151 Along with Otto’s experience of an awe-full and fascinating mystery, this expression is one of Lonergan’s prominent ways of explaining being in love with God.152

Tillich argued that the object of theology is “what concerns us ultimately.”153 He considered that “ultimate concern is the abstract translation of the great commandment” to love the Lord and then one’s neighbor (Mark 12:29).154 It is ultimate in that it is of first significance, unconditional, independent of the vagaries of circumstance; it is a total concern, indeed infinite.155 Less technically, but in a way he found adequately communicated the concept to less technically-adept people, Tillich described ultimate concern as “taking something with ultimate seriousness, absolute seriousness.”156

Ultimate concern, according to Tillich, gives the “existential” character to religious experience.157 Ultimate concern is not about some highest thing, an objective reality for us to analyze and dispute, but about a passionate subjectivity in

which the appropriate engagement is total surrender.\textsuperscript{158} This concern grasps us; we cannot produce its hold on us, could never with good conscience surrender it, find in it an ordering of our lives.\textsuperscript{159}

If that concern is fundamental to what and who we are, ultimate concern defines both us and any possible theological content as applicable to us. “Our ultimate concern is that which determines our being or non-being. Only those statements are theological which deal with their object in so far as it can become a matter of being or not-being for us.”\textsuperscript{160} The whole of human reality, our structure, meaning and destiny, are capable of being saved or lost.\textsuperscript{161} Truly theological language will take its meaning from ultimate concern.

According to Tillich, being grasped by ultimate concern has three possible relations to our other concerns.\textsuperscript{162} First, we may live a life in which our other concerns are indifferently related to our being grasped by ultimate concern. Ordinary life unfolds for us, with perhaps momentary engagements with being grasped by ultimate concern. This relation is unauthentic to ultimate concern, because ultimate concern is unconditional and total in character. Second, we may elevate some penultimate concern, pretending it is of ultimate status. Such an ascribing of infinitude to finitude is idolatrous, and again, contradictory to the character of ultimate concern. In the third relation, however, the preliminary concerns become

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{158} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 1:12.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Brown, \textit{Tillich}, 8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{160} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 1:14, italicized in original.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 1:14.
\item \textsuperscript{162} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 1:13.
\end{itemize}
“bearers and vehicles” of ultimate concern. In and through the finite, preliminary concerns, the infinite is actualized and becomes real.

Tillich’s analysis brings many of Otto’s insights into a discussion of horizons. As I discussed in chapter three, concern (Sorge) is constitutive of one’s horizon and thereby of who and what one is. By utilizing Tillich’s discussion of ultimate concern, Lonergan is able to speak of a way in which our being can be rightly ordered within a horizon by religious experience.

Similarly, authenticity, which Lonergan defines as genuineness in self-transcendence, becomes a question of the concern that orients one within and defines one’s horizon. Is our horizon defined by being grasped by ultimate concern, by being in love with God? If so, are we living authentically in accord with that? Or, is our horizon being dominated by lesser concerns? Are we indifferently vacillating between lesser concerns and the received love of God? Within the horizon characterized by faith—by the knowledge that results from the appropriation of transcendent value—our lives become a dialectic between being authentic toward the love that has come to us and turning away to lesser things. To the extent that we are authentic, our lesser concerns are sublated by being grasped by ultimate concern.

Ignatius Loyola

The third figure Lonergan refers to in his discussion of supernatural religious experience is Ignatius Loyola. When Lonergan alludes to Ignatius in this regard, he

163 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:13.

commonly also refers to Karl Rahner’s interpretation of Ignatius. The insight Lonergan uses comes from a section of *The Spiritual Exercises* having to do with discernment of spirits, and it has caused considerable controversy among the interpreters of Ignatius. In that Lonergan refers to Rahner’s interpretation as representing his own preferred view, my discussion will partially refer to Rahner (as interpreting Ignatius) rather than Ignatius himself.

The religious experience Ignatius described is “consolation that has no cause.” In “Rules for the Second Week” of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius states the proclivity of God and the good angels to give spiritual joy and true happiness by “the motions they cause.” Having stated that rule, Ignatius goes on to give the second rule:

*The Second.* Only God our Lord can give the soul consolation without a preceding cause. For it is the prerogative of the Creator alone to enter the soul, depart from it, and cause a motion in it which draws the person wholly into love of his Divine Majesty. By “without [a preceding] cause” I mean without any previous perception or understanding of some object by means of which the consolation just mentioned might have been stimulated, through the intermediate activity of the person’s acts of understanding and willing.

This rule is given to help one undertaking or directing the Spiritual Exercises to know whether God, a good spirit, or an evil spirit is motivating someone to make an Election (a choice of vocation, or marriage, or some similarly serious decision).

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168 Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, 205-206, emphasis and text in brackets are original. Rahner objects to adding “preceding” to “cause” when it is not explicitly supplied (as the above quoted edition does in the bracketed text). Rahner, *Dynamic Element*, 136n29.

Feelings of happiness and joy based on some preceding cause can, according to Ignatius, come from God, a good spirit, or an evil spirit. They are not an absolutely certain guide to making an Election. However, Ignatius argues that only God can effect consolation without a cause; once carefully examined to be sure it is without a proportionate cause, it is certain that this consolation is from God. The Election made on its basis is therefore secure.

What is consolation without a cause, then? Rahner states that “consolation” signifies an inner frame of mind consonant with peace, tranquility and quiet. By “without previous cause,” Rahner argues that Ignatius means “without conceptual object.” An object grounding a consolation could be, for example, a promise given that comforts the afflicted person, a sign of favor such as receiving a desired gift, or even a miracle that fills one with joy. A definable reason for the consolation exists, some conceptually grasped cause for consolation that is thus present in the consolation. In “consolation that has no cause,” the consolation remains, but there is no such conceptually grasped object that serves as a reason for the consolation.

Such a consolation, according to Ignatius, is the prerogative only of the Creator. Its effect is not simply tranquility or peace of mind, such as might result from believing a promise. Rather, the soul is moved in such a way that it becomes wholly in love with the Creator. Rahner discusses it this way:

The absence of object in question is utter receptivity to God, the inexpressible, non-conceptual experience of the love of the God who is raised transcendent above all that is individual, all that can be mentioned and distinguished, of God as God. There is no longer “any object” but the drawing of the whole person, with the very ground of

170 Rahner, Dynamic Element, 133.


172 Ignatius speaks of this type of consolation immediately before he speaks of the consolation without a cause.
his being, into love, beyond any defined circumscribable object, into the infinity of God as God himself as the divina majestad: trayéndola toda en amor de la su divina majestad.173

One cannot rightly be in love with God simply as another object, for God is not an object, like other objects, for us to apprehend and judge. In consolation without a cause, we are drawn in love as subjects by a divine subject who is immeasurably beyond our grasp.

In my seventh chapter I will revisit this topic, for it is of importance to understand what Lonergan means by a transformation of our feelings, and for seeing how the transformed life is fundamentally a life of prayer. For the present chapter, the greatest significance of Lonergan’s appropriation of Ignatius (via Rahner) is that it is absolutely clear that the change in the human subject is in the operations of the subject’s consciousness themselves and not in any change of environment or noetic object. Supernatural religious experience is not, in the most important case, a love from God apprehended by the subject. It is the transformation of the subject into one who is in love with God. This transformation is experiential, in that all of the operations of the subject’s conscious intentionality are affected. It is an experience of God, for only God, directly, can make such a change.

Here, again, one can see the importance of the exceptions Lonergan notes to the medieval maxim, nothing is loved that is not first known. If what the medievals supposed were the case, we could never be in love with God, for God is not an object for us to apprehend, understand and assess. But, it is the prerogative, the divine initiative, of our Creator to enter into our reality and change us.

Such a change can be described in metaphysical terms as the actuation of an obediential potency, a created communication of the divine nature in which the

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173 Rahner, Dynamic Element, 135.
operations of our consciousness come to participate in the life of God. In much earlier terms it can be identified as the foundation of that hope that does not disappoint us, the love of God poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). However the change is described, it constitutes the difference between living a life whose loves are circumscribed by the created world and living a life oriented by love for the mysterious God.

Grounding Transcendental Method

In his appropriation of Maslow, Otto, Tillich and Ignatius (via Rahner), Lonergan provides what his transcendental method absolutely needs: a way of speaking of the supernatural that is grounded in personal experience. It is a transposition of great moment. The supernatural is not offered as an object to be strictly defined; our knowledge of God is not like that. However, the experiences we do know require explanations, and those explanations point beyond the boundaries of this world.

Given the magnitude of this shift, how will continuity with Lonergan’s earlier grace theology (for example, his analysis of Thomas, in which metaphysics is the primary, not the tertiary discourse), be maintained? In one respect, Lonergan’s early and continual opposition to purely entitative supernaturality is key. He is still speaking of the God known to Aquinas. As Lonergan makes clear in his discussion of Aquinas, Aquinas’ theology of grace was one in which experiential psychological factors were important. What changes with the turn to transcendental method is these experiential factors become the basis for how God is known to us.

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174 See, for example, Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 355-367.
The metaphysical entities, therefore, become conditioned by their basis in personal experience rather than personal experience being conformed to a pre-defined metaphysics. Basing metaphysics in personal experience (via cognitional theory) is not relativistic in that, first, the operations of consciousness evidence great and intrinsic consistency, and second, the personal experience that forms the basis of theology is received from a God who does not change.

What does change is that it becomes ever clearer to us that a need for a relationship with that God is something intrinsic to who we are as human, and that turning away from the call upwards leads us to a loss of ourselves. Yet, we do turn away. There would be no need for a chapter on conversion—a discussion of being transformed by God’s love in a darkened world—if there were not darkness to us, in us. While in this chapter I have implicitly laid a groundwork for discussing conversion (to an extent, already discussed it), one final piece of groundwork must be laid before conversion (in Lonergan’s sense of the word) will make sense.

**Conclusion**

Lonergan’s early theology began with an exploration of grace in the theology of Thomas Aquinas in which Lonergan explained the medieval development of the order of the supernatural. Using this distinction, Aquinas was able to explain how human nature can be elevated and healed by grace without violating human freedom. Lonergan drew upon Aquinas’ theology to explain salvation as a created communication of the divine nature whereby there are operations in creatures through which they somehow attain God’s essence. These operations were identified especially as the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.
Within the context of Lonergan’s later theology, he transposes this intelligibility by explaining that truly self-transcending human subjects are those living in the horizon of faith. Faith is the knowledge born of religious love, the appropriation of transcendent value in the fourth phase of intentional consciousness. Faith is occasioned by the inner word of God’s grace which motivates and grounds the acceptance of the outer words of religious and philosophical tradition.

The horizon of faith is given to one through religious experience. Lonergan uses Maslow’s explanation of growth motivation and peak experience to clarify how religious experience can orient one toward self-transcendence. He also uses Otto’s awe-full and fascinating mystery to explain how religious terms come to gain meaning from the inner word of religious experience. Tillich’s account of ultimate concern brings introduces the way religious experience can shape or give one one’s horizon, and the way that sin is a disordering of concern. Lonergan, finally, uses the spiritual theology of Ignatius (as interpreted by Rahner) to explain that, fundamentally, the most important religious experience is the transformation of the subject into one who is in love with God.
Chapter 5

Sin

That “conversion” is required for self-transcendence gives notice that all things have not gone well. In order to understand what Lonergan means by conversion, I will have to explain what he means by the negative reality of sin. Lonergan discusses sin using several notions: privation, surd, unauthenticity, alienation, bias. Beyond personal expressions of sinfulness, sin becomes a social and historical reality, the root of dialectics of decline.

Terrence Malick, in his film The Thin Red Line, questions through Private Witt, the protagonist,

This great evil. Where does it come from? How'd it steal into the world? What seed, what root did it grow from? Who's doin' this? Who's killin' us? Robbing us of life and light. Mockin' us with the sight of what we might've known. Does our ruin benefit the earth? Does it help the grass to grow, the sun to shine? Is this darkness in you, too? Have you passed to this night?1

Witt gives no answer to this searching question, nor does the film as a whole. Or, perhaps, I should say that they give no direct answer. For, in many ways, the film is not about the Second World War, in which it is set, but the glory beyond the world, whose flame is in us.

As I mentioned in chapter three, Lonergan follows the Augustinian premise that evil is not an existing thing—a substance—but rather a privation, or lack, or misrelation of or in good substances. God is completely good and wise, and the almighty God is the only one capable of creativity in the primary sense: creation out of nothing.

To argue otherwise would either postulate a second principle beside God in creation or contravene the goodness, wisdom and power of God.

God is the first cause of everything that is or occurs. Why, then, would the God who creates, and creates perfectly, also be a God whose creatures suffer and need salvation? Lonergan spends considerable effort exploring the question of evil. In both his examinations of Thomas and his theology written in his own voice, Lonergan faces the question of the darkness.² As with Malick, Lonergan does not find the answer to evil in a direct intelligibility, but rather in the superabundant nature of the good.

In Witt’s questions, “Is this darkness in you, too? Have you passed to this night?” Witt does not specify to whom or what he is speaking. Does he speak to the film’s implied audience in this soliloquy? Or, does he question some other character within the horizon of the film? Or, are the questions intended for the world itself, or to something beyond the world, to the glory? No answer is given directly, and perhaps the ambiguity itself contains the most fecund interpretive possibilities.

Sin as Discussed in Lonergan’s Early Authorship

In discussing the question of the darkness in us, human sin, Lonergan first of all speaks about the goodness, wisdom and power of God. No direct intelligibility is available concerning a lack; there is nothing to understand. Any answer defining it, speaking of it intelligibly, must do so indirectly, by way of the positive realities lacking or deficient. To understand the darkness of human sin, Lonergan first speaks of the luminosity of God in creating.

Michael Stebbins analyzes Lonergan’s treatment of sin in his early writings this way:

The privation that Lonergan identifies with formal sin is not the failure to perform some external act—say the act of acquiring money through licit means instead of by stealing. It is rather the prior failure of the will to choose as it ought, and that failure is privation in the strict sense, the objective falsity entailed by a rational creature’s dissent from the wisdom of divine governance.³

The luminosity is God’s wisdom, the only possible standard and source of goodness, and of rational choice operating as it ought.⁴ With respect to us, this wisdom is displayed and known in the divine governance of the world.

Sin occurs when we freely choose the darkness, turning away from that wisdom or falling short of it. In this choice, something is introduced into our person, our intelligence, our will, our character, that affects us powerfully. The advent of sin has an effect on us psychologically; henceforth, it is easier for us to sin.⁵ There really has been introduced into our psychological makeup an “objective falsity,” a turning away from God’s wisdom.

There is no rational explanation of an objective falsity.⁶ By definition, it is something that lacks rationality; all sin is a choosing against the divine wisdom, which it is never rational to do.⁷ One can trace the genealogy of an objective falsity (the choice for un-wisdom), and one can see the sets of relations the objective falsity

³ Stebbins, Divine Initiative, 279.
⁴ See Lawrence, “Constitutive Communications,” 244-245.
⁵ Lonergan, Grace and Freedom, 100.
⁶ Lonergan, Grace and Freedom, 115.
⁷ “Thus, although one cannot sin without willing something, sin in the strict sense is constituted not by what one wills but by the fact that what one wills is contrary to what one knows ought to be willed.” Stebbins, Divine Initiative, 271.
distorts. But, one cannot find a rationale in that which is a privation of rationality. Rather, one can come to a curious kind of insight—a realization that there is no intelligibility here to be found.  

Evil and sin are manifest in the world. To admit that a manifest fact diminishes and distorts God’s creation might seem to entail diminishing the goodness, power or wisdom of the creator. As stated above, Lonergan denies this. He does so by following the explanation Thomas Aquinas offers.

Lonergan explains Thomas’ doctrine in terms of a “three-lane highway.” The three lanes of this “strange trichotomy” are as follows: 1) what God wills to be (being); 2) what God wills not to be (non-being, including privation in a restricted sense described below); 3) what God permits to happen (privation in the strict sense). In lane one is being, in lane two is non-being, including privation in a restricted sense described below. In lane three is sin, privation in a strict sense.

Experiences of natural evil and of (divine or justified human) punishment are privations in a restricted sense. They are experienced as evil from the standpoint of a restricted nature, namely, that of the person experiencing the natural evil or the punishment. But their occurrence is part of a larger perspective, a component of the overall divine governance of the world. Within this larger perspective, they are part of the occurrence of a good; for example, that the universe functions in a regular way,

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8 See Lonergan, *Insight*, 630. See also below under the biases.


11 Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 112. Lonergan is basing this explanation on ST I 19.9; I 23.5; I 49.2; and I-II 79.1, among other passages in Thomas.

12 Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 279.

13 Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 270.
or that corrective justice is a part of functioning of the world.\textsuperscript{14} This kind of restricted 
privation is part of lane two (what God does not will), for God tolerates but does not 
directly will natural evil or the evil of punishment.\textsuperscript{15} They are tolerated because they 
are part of some higher good’s realization, and the higher good is what God directly 
will.

Sin is willed by God in no way whatsoever. It is forbidden, but not in the 
sense that God makes it impossible to be (hence, sin is in lane three). Rather, God 
permits sin (which God does not will but rather forbids) and makes it part of the 
manifesting of God’s mercy and grace.\textsuperscript{16} God’s ordering of the world in this way is 
not the cause of sin, however. Sin is a privation in the strict sense, a radical defect in 
intelligibility. A cause-effect relationship between the divine ordering and the reality 
of sin would be an intelligibility; but, such intelligibility is exactly what sin does not 
have.\textsuperscript{17} One comes up to, again, the inverse insight that with respect to sin, there is no 
why. But one can see that natural and penal evil, as well as sin, are not parts of the 
world that escaped somehow from the divine governance. The pseudo-being of these 
privations is a part of the divine governance itself.

One can ask, however, about the intelligibility of the divine governance that 
permits sin and indirectly wills natural and punitive evil. In response, Lonergan 
offers what he considers one of Augustine’s deepest insights.\textsuperscript{18} “Omnipotent God, 
whom even the heathen acknowledge as the Supreme Power over all, would not allow 
any evil in his works, unless in his omnipotence and goodness, as the Supreme Good,

\textsuperscript{14}\textsuperscript{ See Stebbins, }Divine Initiative, 270. 

\textsuperscript{15}\textsuperscript{ See Stebbins, }Divine Initiative, 276. 

\textsuperscript{16}\textsuperscript{ Stebbins, }Divine Initiative, 276-277. 

\textsuperscript{17}\textsuperscript{ Stebbins, }Divine Initiative, 277-278. 

\textsuperscript{18}\textsuperscript{ See Lonergan, }Topics in Education, 29-30. 

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he is able to bring forth good out of evil.”19 The answer to this dilemma is therefore eschatological; it is not completely available or manifest to us now.

To give credence to the divine wisdom, power, and goodness in the face of evil, then, will require faith.20 But what Lonergan’s analysis of sin and evil does provide is a theological space in which to consider these existentially powerful non-realities. It provides an intelligible way to answer Witt’s questions, “No, the darkness is not in the Glory, as you will see on the Final Day. Trust the way you see the Glory shining through.”

The Overall Context of Sin in Lonergan’s Later Writings

In his later authorship, Lonergan transposes this analysis of sin into the horizon of transcendental method and augments it in a rich variety of ways. Among these transpositions and augmentations are alienation, unauthenticity, biases, dialectics of decline and the objective surd. As with his handling of the supernatural, his goal is to transpose the genuine insights (whether direct or inverse) of his earlier theology into a method in which the metaphysical entities are derived from human experience, adding to the earlier understandings and correcting them as appropriate.21

The fundamental fact of human sinfulness, in the context of transcendental method, is that humans do not always act in accordance with the transcendental

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20 “Without faith, without the eye of love, the world is too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist. But faith recognizes that God grants men their freedom, that he wills them to be persons and not just his automata, that he calls them to the higher authenticity that overcomes evil with good.” Lonergan, *Method*, 117.

precepts: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable and be responsible. Our attentiveness becomes inattentive, our quest for understanding becomes unintelligent, our judgments of reality become unreasonable, and our moral and existential decisions become irresponsible. That is, we reject or neglect, rather than striving toward, the transcendental notions of Being and Value.

This mis-pursuit of Being and Value reflect and partially result from disorientation in our affections. In judgments of value, three aspects are involved. First, we must possess practical wisdom concerning the concrete situation in which we are deliberating and concerning human beings (our traits, characters, tendencies, histories and social being). Second, we will or should have some moral feeling, an intentional response to value. Third, there is some impetus toward self-transcendence by the mere fact of our being in a situation in which we must judge what is truly worthwhile.

Moral wrongdoing and sin do not result from mere ignorance, a defect in practical wisdom. Moral wrongdoing and sin occur in situations in which we are called toward moral self-transcendence. Thus, it seems reasonable to seek a source of culpable failure in self-transcendence in our moral feelings. Indeed, Lonergan describes the way in which feelings must be corrected, developed and cultivated before they are capable of being reliable guides in discerning value.

Feelings are also powerful carriers of meaning due to their correlation with symbols. In fact, Lonergan affirms that, “affective development, or aberration,

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22 Lonergan, Method, 55.

23 For the following, Lonergan, Method, 38.

24 Unless that defect is the result of our negligence or refusal of intellectual betterment. See the above analysis of sin as a rejection of the divine governance, not an ignorance of it. See also the following discussion of bias.

25 Lonergan, Method, 38 and 245.
involves a transvaluation and transformation of symbols.”

Symbols, according to Lonergan, move between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning. They provide an internally unifying discourse in which we are revealed and known to ourselves. As communicators of meaning and value, they present images to the operation of our consciousness that we can appropriate in coming to insights. A disordering of our feelings will manifest itself in our relation to and use of symbols; the correct responses of value will not be communicated, we will not be at unity or peace with ourselves, and our consciousness will not have the most appropriate images with which to operate, or will be mis-related to the appropriate ones, fearing what we should love or vice-versa.

The deepest disordering of feeling is with respect to love. Lonergan describes the root of the fallen condition this way:

Sinfulness similarly is distinct from moral evil; it is the privation of total loving; it is a radical dimension of lovelessness. That dimension can be hidden by sustained superficiality, by evading ultimate questions, by absorption in all that the world offers us to challenge our resourcefulness, to relax our bodies, to distract our minds. But escape may not be permanent and then the absence of fulfillment reveals itself in unrest, the absence of joy in the pursuit of fun, the absence of peace in disgust—a depressive disgust with oneself or a manic, hostile, even violent disgust with mankind.

Beyond and behind each individual moral failing, then, lies a privation of being-in-love. We can anesthetize ourselves to some extent concerning this lack, but in the end the disordered feelings accompanying it will seep into the operations of our consciousness as discord, as a hostility or even disgust with ourselves and with our

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fellow human beings. To say that such a privation affects our moral functioning, our existential being, is to labor in understatement.\(^{30}\)

**Unauthenticity**

The effect of not following the transcendental precepts is also describable as a failure in self-transcendence. Our moral and existential being is constituted by our choices, by our responsible judgments in which we choose what is of value. In a true judgment of value we know objective goodness; in moral choice, we choose an objective goodness. In a failing to know or choose what is truly of value, we restrict ourselves to a horizon constituted by false relations and defective choices.\(^{31}\)

In this way, we not only lose the objective goodness we have neglected or refused, but we also lose our true selves. For, who we are as existential beings is constituted by our responsible choices. In failing to achieve self-transcendence, we become unauthentic.\(^{32}\) We lose what we ourselves could be and what we could do. We lose “the possibility of benevolence and beneficence, of honest collaboration and of true love, of swinging completely out of the habitat of an animal and becoming a person in a human society.”\(^{33}\) In that God is both the highest truth and the greatest goodness, we lose authentic relation to God.

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\(^{30}\) For more on feelings, see my discussion of them in the chapter on feelings.

\(^{31}\) Lonergan, “Horizons,” 17.

\(^{32}\) See Lonergan, *Method*, 104.

\(^{33}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 104.
Alienation

The result of this loss is alienation. The basic form of human alienation is the disregard of the transcendental precepts.34 As a result of alienation, who we are as conscious subjects becomes different from who we judge ourselves to be.35 As people alienated from ourselves, the move from “I” to “Thou” to “We” becomes blocked; our social being becomes distorted.36 Because the choice against self-transcendence is a choice against the moral government of the world, we become alienated from God, the ground of our existential being and the source of that governance.37 Because this level of personal and social dissonance is discomfiting, ideologues produce self-justifying ideologies, and societies embrace them.38

Absurdity

In the alienation resulting from our disregard of the transcendental precepts, our existence becomes more and more characterized by the absurd.39 Indeed, the notion characterizing human sinfulness that seems closest to the language and presentation of Lonergan’s earlier theology is that of an “objective surd” or “objective social surd.”40 This language indicates, again, that one will find no direct

34 Lonergan, *Method*, 55 and 357. Nancy Ring notes that “It can be stated that Lonergan’s understanding of alienation is rooted in praxis rather than theory. Alienation results from the conscious distortion and limiting of the free play of one’s understanding, judgment, and decisions.” Nancy Ring, “Alienation and Reconciliation,” in *Creativity and Method*, 257.

35 Lonergan, *Method*, 34.


39 Lonergan, “The Subject,” 86.

intelligibility in these failings—they are absurd, and by definition do not have a sufficient or reasonable cause.

The alienation and unauthenticity characteristic of human sin can come to characterize both our personal and social historical situations:

The cumulative irrationality of decisions and actions brings about an ever more distorted, unintelligible, irrational social situation, and, as the situation mounts in unintelligibility, its capacity to suggest intelligible courses of action keeps decreasing until in the limit stagnation sets in.41

This accumulation of absurdity is, in its roots, a turning away from the human erōs toward being and value, our stifling of our “most fundamental orientation” toward realizing ourselves in self-transcendence.42

Bias

As motors that drive this growing absurdity, Lonergan identifies four biases: individual, group, general and dramatic. The biases are introduced in Insight and incorporated into the later horizon of Method. In each of these biases, Lonergan categorizes distinct ways in which we embrace alienation.

In Insight, Lonergan describes the biases as defects that have roots in the functioning of common sense. “Common sense,” a relatively mundane phrase, indicates our attempts to understand the world as it is in relation to us.43 It deals with

41 Lonergan, “Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,” 305.

42 See Ring, “Alienation and Reconciliation,” 255-256.

43 Lonergan, Insight, 198-199. Understanding things as they are in relation to us is differentiated from understanding things as they are in relation to each other. For example, if I were to try to understand water as it is in relation to me, I would describe it as wet, what I wash with, what satisfies me when I am thirsty, what makes the plants around me grow, what I swim in and what might threaten me were I too far from shore. But if I were to try to understand water, as a thing relating to other things, I would probably identify water as H2O, since, apart from any relevance to me, water is a chemical molecule whose intelligibility is grasped as it relates to other molecules, and whose intelligibility can thus be described in relation to the periodic table of the elements. The later
the particular and the concrete and consists of “a set of insights that remains incomplete until there has been added at least one further insight into the situation at hand….\textsuperscript{44} One is reminded of Aristotle’s \textit{phronēsis}, a practical wisdom which is differentiated from scientific or theoretical wisdom, or \textit{sophia}.\textsuperscript{45} As Lonergan explains the biases in \textit{Insight}, dramatic bias affects only common sense; individual, group and general bias can also extend into other differentiations of consciousness.

As Joseph Flanagan argues, “We do not experience the world spontaneously as knowers nor as choosers but in terms of our desires and fears.”\textsuperscript{46} Many of these desires and fears are applicable to people of every culture, but we experience them as mediated by the symbols and practices of our particular cultures.\textsuperscript{47} Common sense has to do with exactly this kind of particularity. In the application of our common sense, the desires and fears we have, the cultural symbols and practices inculcated in us, affect the self-transcendence we experience in knowing and choosing.

This effect is not always a happy one. In terms of our relation to the world, we experience a kind of dialectic—a sometimes oppositional relationship of linked events—between our intersubjectivity and the operation of our common sense.\textsuperscript{48} As understanding is part of the theoretical pattern of experience, the former part of the dramatic pattern of experience.

\textsuperscript{44} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 198-199. Thus, my culture’s reservoir of common sense will tell me to look before I leap; but, it will also tell me that he who hesitates is lost. In order correctly to apply common sense to a concrete situation, I must have a further insight as to which of the above pieces of advice is relevant to \textit{this} situation.

\textsuperscript{45} While Lonergan may have in mind some similar distinction, there is a way in which, given the insights of transcendental method, all of our knowing has the character of \textit{phronēsis}; for, we are constantly moving and changing subjects, and all our knowing is known in the mode of such knowers.


\textsuperscript{47} Flanagan, “Transcultural Knowers and Lovers,” 80.

intersubjective, we spontaneously try to know the world and make responsible choices in it; but, our drive toward authentic knowing and choosing can come in tension with what we fear and desire as individuals. In that these feelings (desires and fears) can be shared by the members of a community, the dialectical tension can become a social reality.

Individual Bias

Individual bias is probably the easiest of the biases to understand. It is personal egoism.\(^{49}\) However, even here, a careful distinction is important; as Aristotle shows, some forms of self-love are legitimate and even necessary for virtue.\(^{50}\) Individual bias is egoism insofar as egoism interferes with pursuing the transcendental precepts.\(^{51}\) The legitimate desire of virtue and wisdom for oneself is not part of individual bias—quite the opposite, for these are what individual bias opposes in situations where virtue and wisdom might act against the satisfactions of the individual.

Lonergan states, “Egoism, then, is an incomplete development of intelligence.”\(^{52}\) The desires and fears we have as individuals concerning our individual satisfactions motivate us to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in situations where to do so is to our advantage. However, in situations that look beyond our interests, that benefit others, or that call for self-sacrifice, the free exercise of our intellectual and moral being is stifled. The exercise of our

\(^{49}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 244-247.

\(^{50}\) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.8.


\(^{52}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 245.
knowing and choosing is misdirected away from the good of order and subverted disproportionately to our own particular good.\textsuperscript{53}

Individual bias is culpable. Lonergan argues that the egoist does not develop by mere inadvertence to the good of order but by “conscious self-orientation” toward exploiting that social order.\textsuperscript{54} Egoism is a choice to resist and subvert our spontaneous drive toward self-transcendence. Relevant questions, whose honest consideration would lead us, for instance, to privilege the good of others, are suppressed.\textsuperscript{55}

Individual bias is therefore at least partially a conscious phenomenon. We know very well what we are doing, though we run from the knowledge. “The egoist’s uneasy conscience is his awareness of his sin against the light.”\textsuperscript{56} One is here reminded of Maslow’s description of the way self-despite develops as our psychological harvest for choices made against authenticity.

Group Bias

Group bias, in many ways, is individual bias writ large. There exists also the egoism of the group.\textsuperscript{57} Like individual bias, it is a result of a malfunction, or blockage, in the exercise of common sense but can also be present in the other patterns of experience.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{53} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 54.

\textsuperscript{54} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 246.

\textsuperscript{55} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 246-247.

\textsuperscript{56} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 247.

\textsuperscript{57} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 54.

\textsuperscript{58} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 247.
Groups are defined by sets of social relations. These relations have political, economic and technological aspects, and they rest on sets of expectations.\(^{59}\) To the extent that one is a knowledgeable and responsible member of a group, one knows what to expect, what to do, in any common situation.

The social relations that define groups, and the expectations we develop in them, constitute us as members of cultures and societies. They make us not a mere collection of individuals but members of a social order that “consolidates its gains and expedites its operations by turning to its own ends the vast resources of human imagination and emotion, sensitivity and confidence, familiarity and loyalty.”\(^{60}\) As a people, we are motivated to become knowers and choosers in a horizon larger than our particular satisfactions, the horizon of the good of our group.

Group bias (when this knowing and choosing go wrong) is therefore more powerful than individual bias. Individual bias will usually receive social censure, while the whole creative potential of a society may be devoted to the justification of its own interests and ends.\(^{61}\) Ideologies develop as self-justifying discourse.\(^{62}\) Also, group bias and individual bias both begin as distortions in the functioning of common sense. But group bias is closer to the origin of common sense in that common sense is a practical way of knowing that we receive in large part from our social group.\(^{63}\)

Group bias is expressed when the development of a group becomes self-regarding to the necessary detriment of other groups.\(^{64}\) It is the egoism of a group and


\(^{60}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 248.


\(^{63}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 248-249.

\(^{64}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 249.
of members of that group in favor of the group’s interests and point of view. Group bias is not involved in all the traditions and development of a group; it becomes evident when those traditions or development compromise our spontaneous urge to transcend ourselves.

In group bias, the practical insights that would be to the disadvantage of the group (or of its dominant members) are suppressed. In this way, the spontaneous urge of the members of the group toward self-transcendence is truncated; the horizon allowed is wider than the individual, but still it is not characterized by the drive toward the transcendental precepts of being and value. Our own points of view seemingly make so much sense, and are seen to be so justified, that other viewpoints need not receive truly equal consideration.

In that dominant members of a group tend to shape the development of its common sense, the effect of group bias tends toward fragmentation. Dominant groups distort the progress of a society in their own favor, for the insights that would lead to more equal conditions are not given a fair hearing. Also, groups become fragmented from each other. In that the group’s own interests and viewpoints are privileged, each group has a tendency to develop a narrative that expounds its own special character and destiny. Encounter with another group, ensconced in its own egoistic narrative, then results in incomprehension and disapproval of the other group.

Just as with individual bias, group bias is culpable. “The sins of group bias may be secret and almost unconscious. But what originally was a neglected possibility becomes in time a grotesquely distorted reality.”67 The spontaneous urge

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65 Lonergan, Method, 54.

66 Lonergan, Insight, 249-250. Class warfare can result when the sentiments of the repressed classes are channeled into action.

67 Lonergan, Insight, 250.
to know reality and choose what is of value remains, and as with individual bias its suppression is our sin against the light.

**General Bias**

General bias is a malfunction of common sense with respect to its competence to judge the whole world. Common sense is concerned with the particular, with knowing what is the case or what to do in concrete situations. It is concerned with a practicality that is immanent, easily seen, and directly realized. However, not all genuine knowledge and not all good courses of action meet these criteria. Scientific, scholarly, and theoretical patterns of experience produce knowledge and counsel whose applicability is often remote. Human intellectual development is gradual and sometimes does not appear at all. Our need to solve the problems in the world, however, is manifest.\(^{68}\)

There is a great temptation to people of common sense, therefore, to discount the forms of knowledge that do not communicate effectively in common sense’s terms. Especially suspect are those types of intellectual and moral development whose practical results will be seen over centuries and not immediately. Common sense, of course, has great power to solve problems in concrete situations. However, when a problem emerges that is beyond the situations known to our common sense or whose solution does not lie in our common reservoir of practical insights, theoretical development is needed. In its imperialistic devaluing of forms of knowledge different from it, the general bias of common sense stunts the free exercise of the spirit of inquiry.

\(^{68}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 250-251.
In this way, intelligent people come to concentrate on short-term benefits and ignore long-term costs. This shortsightedness is both destructive and culpable. This rationalization of their limitations by people of common sense is a step away from authenticity. It is a repression and devaluing of the spontaneous drive to know being and choose value. And, in time, as pervading a society, its results can be devastating.

Dramatic Bias

Individual, group and general bias are defects in our relation to the world of being and value. Lonergan defines them as malfunctions based in common sense with respect to the objects of our cognition. Dramatic bias, on the other hand, is a defect in us, as the subjects who do the relating.

Dramatic bias is a flight from unwanted insights concerning ourselves. It is the repression, based on “elemental passions,” of insights that might lead to knowledge we do not wish to have. We become blind to certain aspects of our own reality because they produce distaste, dread, or even revulsion in us.

The operation of dramatic bias is unconscious. In describing this unconscious operation, Lonergan draws on the theories of Sigmund Freud. With respect to Freud, Lonergan describes a malfunctioning of our censorship.

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70 See below on the dialectic of sin and cycles of decline.


Freud pictured the censor as a kind of doorman who regulates the entrance into consciousness of images and impulses from the unconscious. In dreams but also in waking life, we receive impulses and images from our Id that attempt to gain admittance to our consciousness. The censorship is the regulating function that decides which images and impulses should be admitted. Freud saw the functioning of the censor as necessary to the development of the self, a process that helps us establish our identity (that is, have a healthy psycho-sexual development).\textsuperscript{75}

Lonergan explains that the function of the censor is normally constructive, admitting and arranging the images and impulses most appropriate for the functioning of our consciousness. However, within us there is not only light but darkness, and we often wish to stay in the darkness. When the functioning of the censor becomes distorted, we repress images and impulses that lead toward uncomfortable truths concerning ourselves. Albeit in an unconscious way, we lie to ourselves about ourselves because we cannot stand the reality of what is in us.\textsuperscript{76} The bias is dramatic in that we assess our lives aesthetically, as a performance, and in this valuation we are weighed in the balance and found wanting.\textsuperscript{77}

The incorporation of individual, group and general bias from \textit{Insight} into the context of \textit{Method} is relatively straightforward. Lonergan repeatedly names them, describes them, and refers to his earlier work concerning them.\textsuperscript{78} With dramatic bias, the situation is different.

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\textsuperscript{76} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 215-217.
\textsuperscript{77} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 219-220.
\textsuperscript{78} See, for example, Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 54-55, 240 and 270.
\end{flushleft}
Lonergan does not mention dramatic bias by name in *Method in Theology*. To my knowledge, he speaks of dramatic bias by name only once in his later authorship.\(^7^9\) In the lists of biases given in *Method*, it is conspicuously absent. The dramatic pattern of experience is still recognized and significant.\(^8^0\) But, there is no naming of dramatic bias.

To add to the difficulty, dramatic bias has pride of place in the discussion of the biases in *Insight*. It is discussed first and at most length; also, while the other biases are biases regarding the objects of common sense, dramatic bias is a bias in common sense as subject. Furthermore, dramatic bias’ role in regulating images (symbols) and impulses (feelings) touches on matters of central importance to *Method*.

That dramatic bias is unnamed as such does not mean it is absent from *Method in Theology*. In the one later work in which Lonergan names dramatic bias, he refers to it as “the latent bias in our unconscious motivation.”\(^8^1\) In a similar paragraph in *Method*, Lonergan describes “the bias of unconscious motivation brought to light by depth psychology.”\(^8^2\) In this way, the notion named “dramatic bias” in *Insight* probably makes its entry into *Method in Theology*.

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81 Lonergan, “Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,” 305 and 309. Dramatic bias is named on page 309 referring back to Lonergan’s discussion on page 305. On page 305, the “latent bias in our unconscious motivation” appears at the head of a paragraph in which individual, group and general bias are successively and summarily described. In that dramatic bias deals directly with unconscious motivation (and the term “unconscious” is not common in Lonergan’s authorship), and in that it appears at the head of a series of biases, I think it is highly probable that Lonergan is referring to dramatic bias this way.

82 Lonergan, *Method*, 231. As in “Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,” Lonergan here goes on in the rest of the paragraph summarily to describe individual, group and general bias. His reference in this passage in *Method* to the discussion of bias in *Insight* here includes the pages on dramatic bias. In the other instances in *Method* in which he references his earlier work on bias, the pages on dramatic bias are usually not included.
Why the near disappearance of dramatic bias? Without a declaration by Lonergan concerning the matter (and I am aware of none), the interpreter can only offer possibly relevant hypotheses concerning the phenomenon.\(^83\) In that “the bias of unconscious motivation” does survive, it seems unlikely that Lonergan jettisoned the notion altogether. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, the symbols and feelings dramatic bias was concerned with take on deeper significance in *Method* than in *Insight*.

It seems to me most likely that Lonergan simply found a better way to express what he had earlier expressed under the name of dramatic bias. One reason that could have motivated the change is the restricted and changed nature of “the unconscious” in the later Lonergan. In *Method*, he prefers to speak of different aspects of consciousness and not to distinguish consciousness, preconsciousness and unconsciousness in the manner expected by psychoanalytic theory.\(^84\)

In his discussion of feelings, Lonergan speaks of how it is better “to take full cognizance of one’s feelings, however deplorable they may be.”\(^85\) To meet them and know them is to root out the “inattention, obtuseness, silliness and irresponsibility that give rise to the feeling one does not want, and to correct the aberrant attitude.”\(^86\) Not to do so is to fail to know oneself, to fail to follow the transcendental precepts; such a course of action leaves the feelings in the “twilight of what is conscious but not

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\(^83\) Robert Doran’s work on psychic conversion may be an attempt to answer this question. See Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 233-235.

\(^84\) That is not to say that Lonergan completely dispenses with the language of conscious and unconscious. See, for example, *Method*, 177-178. However, it seems to me reasonable, in light of his explanation given in *Method*, 33-34, that this use of “conscious” and “unconscious” is best understood in light of that explanation and not as a re-introduction of Freud’s theory of the unconscious.


objectified.”87 This results in the alienation described above because the self as conscious (who I am as a conscious being) becomes at variance with the self as objectified (who I am as an object of my own reflection).

In regard to this paragraph, Lonergan has two instructive notes concerning psychoanalytic theory. First, the “twilight of what is conscious but not objectified seems to be the meaning of what some psychiatrists call the unconscious.”88 Karen Horney (a prominent follower of Freud), Raymond Hostie (an interpreter of Jung) and Wilhelm Stekel (one of Freud’s earliest followers) are referred to as some of these psychologists. Rather than an unconscious, Lonergan speaks of non-objectified portions or aspects of consciousness. Feelings, the transmitters of value, can live in this twilight.

Second, the alienation from oneself bears fruit in neuroses.89 In this respect, Lonergan makes a comparison between his own transcendental method and Carl Rogers’ client-centered therapy. Transcendental method has as its foundation self-appropriation, in knowing oneself as one truly is in all one’s operations of consciousness. Rogers’ therapy, similarly, is “an appropriation of one’s own feelings. As the former task is blocked by misconceptions of human knowing, so to the latter is blocked by misconception of what one spontaneously is.”90 Therefore, analogous to the step of self-appropriation in which one comes to know oneself as a knower and chooser, there is a self-appropriation with respect to the feelings that accompany our

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87 Lonergan, *Method*, 34.
89 Lonergan, *Method*, 34 and 34n6. Lonergan refers to Karen Horney’s psychology concerning the development of neuroses and to Carl Rogers’ therapy concerning their cure.
relation of our self to our self, the feelings that motivate the conscious operations analyzed by intentionality analysis.  

In discussing feelings, especially feelings that can inhabit the twilight of consciousness and deal with our relation of ourselves to ourselves, Lonergan is covering much of the same territory he covered in *Insight* when speaking of dramatic bias. His appropriation of Freudian theory has changed, however, or at least the way he expresses that appropriation has changed. In the context of *Method*, the conscious side of a person or group is in control except in cases of psychological disease.  

No orthodox Freudian could make such a statement, while the same Freudian could applaud much of Lonergan’s analysis of dramatic bias in *Insight*. And, again, it seems best to me to interpret Lonergan’s use of conscious and unconscious here (*Method*, 177-178) in light of his explanation given in *Method*, 34-35.

In the context of *Method*, the effects of the corruption of our feelings extends beyond the fourth phase of intentional consciousness, even though the role of feelings is most apparent there. Each of the transcendental precepts is a moral imperative indicating the way we should operate. The affective insights that illuminate value to

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91 On the development of feelings, Lonergan says, Feelings, like skills, develop, but they do not develop in the same way as skills. Feelings never become something we can control as we control the movement of our hands and feet, and so on. They are not at the beck and call of our will. While feelings do arise spontaneously, still once they have arisen they can be reinforced or curtailed, and in that way one can change one’s spontaneous preferences—by such advertence, approval, or distraction, moving on to something else. The process of education is not merely a matter of advancing in knowledge, it is also a matter of the refinement of one’s feelings, creating a climate of discernment in which one can respond to values more fully, more exactly, more precisely. Thus, self-appropriation with respect to feelings includes knowing what feelings are, realizing the role they play in our operations of consciousness, recognizing the feelings that one in fact has, recognizing what methods are effective for training or shaping one’s feelings, and, as best one can, applying those methods. Lonergan, “What Are Judgments of Value,” 141. For Lonergan’s references to Carl Rogers’ client-centered therapy as a therapeutic process for healing aberrations in our feelings similar to Lonergan’s intentionality analysis, see Lonergan, *Method*, 34n6; “Philosophy of God,” 169n9; “Self-Transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious,” 322.

us obviously are affected when our feelings become disordered. However, there is a moral component in our knowing, as well. Judgments of fact are not automatic, and neither is the formulation of concepts. We are free to accept or reject the direct and indirect insights in a way that is authentic or unauthentic. The feelings that give our processes of cognition momentum have a role in this choice, in that they are the responses that reveal value to us (in these cases, the value of being intelligent or reasonable). Being attentive, additionally, has a moral component. It is often easier to look away, to choose ignorance, or to impose our previous assumptions or desires on the other that confronts us. In this way, affective insight can constitute a remote condition for the rectitude of our conscious operations in phases one, two and three. The corruption of our feelings by bias, therefore, is an improper (remote) relation that negatively affects the probability that we will be attentive, intelligent and reasonable, and a proper (direct) relation that negatively affects whether we will choose responsibly.

Besides a different, and arguably much richer, development of feelings vis-à-vis consciousness, Lonergan’s later writings also offer a stronger and more nuanced interaction with symbols. My discussion of symbols, as well as my fuller development of Lonergan’s work on feelings, will occur in chapter seven. However, let me again note that in analyzing symbols as entities with a kind of dual-citizen status in the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning, Lonergan is giving a later development of territory covered in *Insight* under the heading of dramatic bias because the management of impulses (feelings) and images (symbols) with respect to consciousness is exactly the function of the censor Lonergan there discusses.
Further re-contextualizations of dramatic bias, however, occur in the section where Lonergan explicitly names it as such:

But if one is to ‘use good to defeat evil’ (Romans 12.21), conversion to God, to the good, to the true, has to be complemented with knowledge of evil and the will to overcome it. To knowledge of evil I have already alluded in the section on the dialectical principle. I have treated the same matter from a particular viewpoint in *Insight* on dramatic bias; on tension, dialectic, and bias in community; on liberation from moral impotence; on the role of faith, hope and charity in overcoming social evil.  

Conversion to God, to the good and to the true seem to be cognate with religious, moral and intellectual conversion. Similarly, “the knowledge of evil,” “tension, dialectic and bias in community,” “moral impotence,” and the “social evil” overcome by faith, hope and charity, may provide a semantic range in which we can better understand what Lonergan was discussing in *Insight* as dramatic bias.

In *Insight*, Lonergan begins his discussion of dramatic bias with the observation that we often love the darkness, rather than the light. With such a reference to John 3:19, Lonergan speaks of our radical moral impotence, the way in which we cling to ignorance because we do not wish that which is evil in ourselves to be revealed. Likewise, as he explains in “Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,” our existence is describable by a dialectical principle; we are characterized by a radical ambiguity, an ambiguity in how we chose as moral agents, in what we come to believe or know as intelligent and reasonable agents, in whether we are authentic or unauthentic as human subjects.  

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transcendence, who are spontaneously motivated toward it the unintelligible privation of sin occurs. This sin, whose absurdity comes to characterize our societies, is overcome only in the actuation of faith, hope and charity.

Within this range of meanings one probably does not find an exact equivalent to dramatic bias. One arguably finds a set of intelligibilities set in genetic relation to dramatic bias. What Lonergan described “from a particular point of view in Insight” is related to his later descriptions of our moral impotence and the radical nature of our sinfulness. One finds, transposed to the context of transcendental method, a notion of radical sin.

Bias and Emergent Probability

With respect to the functioning of all the biases, I think it is best to understand them relative to emergent probability. Kenneth Melchin argues that the sections in Insight on “common sense” and “ethics,” and the sections in Method in Theology on “skills and the human good,” “sublation and the functional specialties,” “history” and “conversions,” are governed by the principle of emergent probability. Relevant descriptions of the biases in both Insight and Method occur in these sections.

To explain the relation of emergent probability to the biases, let me explain the larger picture. When explaining the dynamic structure of common sense (which the biases affect) in Insight, Lonergan states,

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97 Lonergan, in this respect, refers to his discussion of sin from Grace and Freedom.


99 See, for example, Lonergan, Method, 240, a discussion of conversion in which he discusses the biases and refers to his earlier discussion of them in Insight.
As in the fields of physics, chemistry, and biology, so in the field of human events and relationships there are classical and statistical laws that combine concretely in culminating sets of schemes of recurrence. For the advent of man does not abrogate the rule of emergent probability.\(^{100}\)

Also, within the context of *Method*, when discussing the human good that the biases distort, Lonergan specifies that the good of order demonstrates a particular instance of the general principle of emergent probability.\(^{101}\) Furthermore, the general context of a universe in which authenticity can bring about progress and unauthenticity will bring about decline is one in which the classical and statistical laws are operative—one “characterized by a process of emergent probability.”\(^{102}\) The functioning, then, of the processes that the biases distort occurs according to emergent probability. In that they are privations, defects in intelligibility, they do not introduce a new principle of operation of their own but introduce breakdowns in the existing sets of operations.

Emergent probability describes the way that the world intelligibly develops given the realities and dynamics that are currently existent and that have previously existed, according to statistical and classical laws. In the case of the biases, emergent probability describes the way unintelligibility comes to characterize the actions of persons and sets of social situations. Note that emergent probability does not thereby give a direct intelligibility to bias—there is none, in that the biases are strict privations of intelligibility. However, emergent probability does describe the way that different kinds of unintelligibility distort the sets of relations and operations evident in the human good.

\(^{100}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 235.

\(^{101}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 49 and 49n16; see also *Method*, 50n17.

In individual bias, a probability schedule is enacted in which a person expressing it is more likely in a given situation to privilege her own good over the good of order. In group bias, a probability schedule is enacted in which the group, or its dominant members, are more likely to privilege their own interests and viewpoints over those of other groups. In persons and groups expressing general bias, a probability schedule is enacted in which the person or group is more likely to discount theoretical development and prefer short-term practicality to long-term solutions. In dramatic bias (or in the bias of our unconscious motivation), a probability schedule is enacted in which our feelings are disordered and our personal and social being comes to express the fruit of radical sin.

Enacting a probability schedule does not ensure that the actions of those expressing it will always occur in a way congruent with the probabilities. Statistical laws do not work that way, short of probability one or zero. Exceptions can always take place. In the long term, however, they are sure as gravity.

Lonergan’s discussion of Thomas Aquinas’ pessimistic view of human nature is relevant in this regard. In that human beings are essentially temporal, at birth our potential is indeterminate; our rationality and moral capability form a kind of spiritual counterpart to prime matter. Therefore, since there is often only one way truly to do what is right, but an almost infinite number of ways to go wrong, we will almost always go wrong unless the actuation of our potential is guided in some way. Since our potential is indeterminate, our spontaneous operations will be nearly random.

Developed habits of righteousness could guide the way our potential becomes actuality, but no one originally has such developed habits. We can also find the truth and choose what is right through deliberation, but our temporal nature limits our

103 Lonergan, Grace and Freedom, 45.
ability to deliberate. We have neither the time nor the attentiveness to deliberate concerning every situation.²⁰⁴

Additionally, choosing sin has an effect on us. We are psychologically continuous beings, and our choices both for good and evil have ramifications for our future behavior. Once we have chosen sin in one case, it becomes easier (more probable) for us to choose it again.

Therefore, in any concrete situation, it is possible for us to escape sin. We can deliberate. However, over the expanse of our lives (or even a few days, I would think), we will not escape sin through deliberation alone. We cannot deliberate concerning every choice, nor are we likely to follow the results of all our deliberations perfectly. The probabilities will catch up with us. And having caught up to us, they will not let us go. Because of the psychological effects of sin, it becomes more likely that we will sin in the future. Even greater probabilities of sin are introduced that, while still not certain in any one case, in the long run carry us along like a current.

The biases, likewise, operate in a way that suppresses the development and integration of insights that we rightfully should develop.²⁰⁵ In this way, they enact psychologically continuous probability schedules that lead us away from self-transcendence, toward alienation, unauthenticity, absurdity. As individuals, and as members of societies, we are incarnate acts of meaning. To the extent that the biases are operative, alienation, unauthenticity and absurdity come to characterize the meanings that we are.

What are the factors that enact these probability schedules? In that the biases are based on the functioning of our common sense, it seems reasonable to look to the


²⁰⁵ See Melchin, 278-280 on integrators and operators, and on the mediating role of intelligence.
fears and desires (the feelings) that characterize this way of knowing the world. Our feelings have become disordered, and, this disordering of our motivation has had a deep and powerful effect on our lives.106

Hence, Lonergan repeatedly speaks of preference scales in the context of our apprehension of values, something deeply affected by our feelings.107 A preference scale has to do with how we rank one value relative to another; especially it is connected with feeling in the apprehension of value. In human decline, our preference scales become distorted. We become motivated not toward being and value, but toward deeper absurdity. Such a distortion is not necessarily something we always consciously choose. In that these feelings often live in the non-objectified twilight of our consciousness, both our unconscious motivations and the symbols that mediate between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning are also important factors in our decline.

Decline

Without the healing and elevation of who we are as humans, such decline appears to be our lot. Our best traditions become decadent; our most prized sciences abandon the scientific ideal.108 As with Gadamer and Heidegger, one can rightfully develop a deep “sense of Ruinanz: all things human, given enough time, go badly.”109

The authenticity we achieve is always in dialectic with unauthenticity, due to factors

107 Lonergan, Method, 40, 50, 52 and 240.
within us and outside us that are beyond our control.\textsuperscript{110} The besetting effects of bias constitute within us an orientation toward the darkness, a probability schedule in which the horizons within which the operations of our consciousness occur come to be characterized, not by self-transcendence, but by a loss of self.

Such decline has what Lonergan describes as minor and major aspects. In this case, the minor aspects are only minor in comparison to the major—a comparison of an individual case of a deadly disease to an epidemic. Decline is a negative reality, a privation. It therefore is known in relation to progress, the positive reality it distorts. Progress, according to Lonergan, proceeds from “originating value, from subjects being their true selves by observing the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible.”\textsuperscript{111} In both its minor and major aspects, decline results from our turning away from these precepts.

In the minor dialectic of sin, “Bias begins by conferring an elemental vigor to every process of change, provided, of course, that the change is in the right direction.”\textsuperscript{112} The direction animated by the biases will include some aspect of unintelligibility, some objective falsity. The changes motivated by bias, therefore, are incomplete and distorted; they may be improvements, in a way, but inextricably they will also be involved in a compromise of what is authentic and self-transcending with what is not.\textsuperscript{113} In this way, the relations and common understandings that characterize

\textsuperscript{110} Lawrence, “Hermeneutic Revolution,” 349.
\textsuperscript{111} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 53.
\textsuperscript{112} Lonergan, “Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,” 305.
\textsuperscript{113} Lonergan, “Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,” 305.
and constitute a society become more and more absurd. The effects of the biases are cumulative, and in the end, the effects of decline are disastrous.114

When decline comes to characterize a society, the major dialectic of sin becomes evident. We want our biases to be justified.115 As the effects of bias come to characterize our selves and our societies, they come to have the authority of the familiar. They become the air we breathe, and that we want to breathe. Lonergan describes the major dialectic of sin this way:

Not only does [decline] compromise and distort progress. Not only do inattention, obtuseness, unreasonableness, irresponsibility produce objectively absurd situations. Not only do ideologies corrupt minds. But compromise and distortion discredit progress. Objectively absurd situations do not yield to treatment. Corrupt minds have a flair for picking the mistaken solution and insisting that it alone is intelligent, reasonable, good. Imperceptibly the corruption spreads from the harsh sphere of material advantage and power to the mass media, the stylish journals, the literary movements, the educational process, the reigning philosophies. A civilization in decline digs its own grave with relentless consistency.116

In this way, one can see the pointlessness of trying to move someone, or some society, out of a situation of decline through rational argumentation alone. That which has authority for us is in many ways that which is familiar to us.117 But, in the major dialectic of sin (the deeper level of decline), sin and decline have become familiar to us. We desire for them to be good and true, for they constitute the dynamics of our reality, and we desire to be good and true. The rationality of an argument is assessed by the mind of the one receiving it. And our minds have become corrupted, no longer recognizing or desiring that which is real and of value.118 A message characterized by

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114 See Lonergan, Method, 53-54.
116 Lonergan, Method, 54-55.
117 See Aristotle, Metaphysics, 2.3.
118 Lonergan, Method, 55.
what is real and of value will be foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18). Dominated as we are by alienation and unauthenticity, we dream of a better day but place our hopes for enacting that day into measures that lead to further decline.119

Conclusion

While the elevation of the human spirit would be necessary for even an unfallen human being (in that no created nature is proportionate to the divine essence), we also require healing because we know sin. In his early theology, Lonergan explains sin as a strict privation, a dimishment or corruption (allowed by God) of God’s creation by an objective falsity. In his later theology, Lonergan transposes the idea of strict privation in terms of the presence of an objective surd in human existence, and the alienation and unauthenticity of our lives. The work of bias (individual, group, general, and the bias of the unconscious motivations), especially, leads in specific ways to our decline.

119 I believe the deeper level of decline (or, major dialectic of sin) has a genetic relation to what Lonergan describes in Insight as the longer cycle of decline. See Lonergan, Insight, 251-257. This important discussion in Insight spells out many of the roots and operative principles in the deeper level of decline in a way that Method does not. The major advance in Method is that choosing decline is considered from a moral point of view and not mainly from an intellectual one. In other words, Insight’s discussion of the longer cycle of decline shows how the operations of our consciousness become corrupted by the interaction of group and general bias. These corruptions take place on the first three levels of our conscious intentionality (experiencing, understanding, judging). Method describes a decline that is also existential, with a key component happening on the fourth level of intentional consciousness (deciding), and including an important aspect of the role of feeling (motivation), as well. However, I believe the corruption of the first three levels described in Insight is still apropos, and most probably sublated into Method’s more comprehensive horizon.
Chapter 6

The Conversions

This work has ranged from the sublimity of the Beatific Vision to the depths of depravity expressed in our selves, our societies and our world history. Having a vision of what human beings might be is one thing, having a knowledge of how eternal life can enter this darkened world is another. What can rescue us from the body of this death?

The answer to this question, that quite dominates Lonergan’s later authorship, is conversion. Insofar as Christian theology offers answers to problems, conversion is the essential answer to the problem of sin. Insofar as Christian theology posits positive realities, conversion constitutes the beginning of supernatural life in us.

At the age of ninety-five, Fanny Crosby tried to capture the feelings of her November Experience, so many years before. In her poem, “Valley of Silence,” she speaks of wandering through the world bereft of true satisfaction, and seeking for God, who when found, speaks to her as a lover.1 In the last stanza, she says,

Do you ask what I found in this Valley?
’Tis my trysting place with the Divine,
For I fell at the feet of the Holy,
And above me a voice said, "Be Mine."
And there rose from the depth of my spirit,
The echo, "My heart shall be Thine."2

Conversion is a complex notion within Lonergan’s writings. It is a word with a history, and it is often not used univocally even within one time period of Lonergan’s authorship. Such is not surprising given the depth of this notion within the Christian

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2 Crosby, “Valley of Silence.”
tradition. As with Crosby, Lonergan’s highest understanding of conversion involves a genuine meeting with the divine, a response of the human heart to the God’s call.

While other senses exist, I will argue that in Lonergan’s fully developed thought they are dependent on being transformed by the love of God.

Sin has an answer in conversion. Lonergan describes three conversions in *Method in Theology*: intellectual, moral and religious. While I am discussing mainly the relation between moral and religious conversion, a short discussion of intellectual conversion will be necessary. My explanation of the conversions will prepare for my discussion in chapters seven and eight showing that (and how) religious conversion sublates and is necessary for moral conversion. In this way, the intricately ordered human good becomes transformed, beginning its participation in the eternal life of God.

The Notion of Conversion

In *Method in Theology*, and in the other portions of his writings that cluster around that work, Lonergan speaks of three conversions: religious, moral and intellectual. The notion of conversion used in these three is the fruit of significant development in his thought. Far from being unitary realities, they are capable of being related when they occur in one human subject. In fact, some of these relations are necessary ones, *de facto* or *de jure* relations of necessary dependence.

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3 Some of Lonergan’s latest writings introduce further conversions beyond, or replacing, these three. See Bernard Lonergan, “Reality, Myth, Symbol,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980*, 390 and 390n13; and Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” 179. The present work is interpreting the authorship of Lonergan leading up to and surrounding *Method in Theology*, and thus will limit its discussion to religious, moral and intellectual conversions. Besides my need to limit this work in order to make its scope manageable, I feel that the three conversions given in *Method in Theology* are the most thoroughly worked out and the most coherent in Lonergan’s own work. The other conversions, when they are mentioned by Lonergan at all, occur quite late in his authorship. While this fact should not prejudice one against them, it precluded their receiving the kind of full-fleshed development the trio from *Method* receives.
Conversion in Lonergan’s Early Writings

Lonergan speaks of conversion in his earliest published writings, and does so in a way germane to its usage in his later work. He explains and interprets Aquinas’ doctrine of God’s directing the soul to a supernatural end. According to Aquinas, any created being, even an angel, needs God’s assistance to will an absolutely supernatural end. This work of God involves three conversions: the final and complete conversion of the Beatific Vision; the meritorious conversion connected with receiving habitual grace, and the preparatory conversion, not involving an infused habit, in which God operates to convert the soul toward God.

The most essential work of God in these conversions is in moving us to will the end. In deliberation, we choose among various means with which to achieve ends, but the choice of end itself is given to our will, not chosen by it. Spontaneously, our wills tend toward the natural good (or, at least, they do so if their operation has not been corrupted). In the conversions Aquinas discusses, the end that the will is moved toward is God.

God, who is both quite determinate and the *summum bonum* of every good, is disproportionate to any created will. To be moved to will God as an end requires God’s operation in us. The initial part of this operation must be an operative grace

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6 ST I 62.2 c.
8 See Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 84-87, for an explanation and a helpful chart.
(in which the will is moved and itself contributes nothing), because there is nothing in the will (before God’s operation on it) that is proportionate to willing God.

Such an action does not abrogate human freedom, because it does not take place without human free will. The moving of the will is attributed to God as first cause, just as the making of a box is attributed to a carpenter and not to his tools. Human will is moved by God as an outside principle to the ultimate good. But choice of ends is not free, in any case, because ends cannot be deliberated about. One cannot wake up one day and choose to will evil instead of good (if one tried, one would be willing what one thought was a good). Neither can one choose to will a supernatural end. But, God, the Creator, can work in the will so that it does so. Human free will keeps on operating freely in terms of choice of means toward the end, but because of God’s primary causality the will’s action is attributed primarily to God.

God’s operation on the will, in this way, is not adding a new potential to the will (that would be adding potency, which is by nature a limitation or restriction). Rather, God acts on the will by further actuation, by giving expansion and enlargement. The most free are those who enjoy the perfection of this expansion, the actuation of an already existing potency toward willing the supernatural end.

That the initial aspect of this grace of conversion is operative (in us but not from us) does not prevent the further working of God’s grace from being cooperative. Humans are assisted by God’s operative grace to will the ultimate good. With that

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end presupposed, human nature has been elevated; we have been given the grace to cooperate with God in further actions of grace.\textsuperscript{14}

Up to this point in the argument, which kind of created will is in question (an angel’s, an unfallen human’s or a fallen human’s) does not matter. None are proportionate to the divine essence.\textsuperscript{15} However, we are fallen beings. Therefore, the conversions as operative in us must redress the corruption of sin. They consequently have the nature of repentance.

Aquinas speaks of this repentance in two ways.\textsuperscript{16} The first type of repentance is in the reception of the habit of charity by sanctifying grace. This is a repentance in that it replaces habits in us that are opposed to charity (vices), and augments those that are sympathetic to it (justice, etc.). It is purely the work of operative grace.

The second type of repentance is in a series of cooperative graces subsequent to operative grace, acts in which we cooperate with God in choosing to repent once God has initially moved us. The operative grace, the principle of the others, is God’s converting our hearts to God (Lamentations 5:21—“Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored”).\textsuperscript{17} The cooperative graces are as follows: first, the movement of faith; second, the movement of “servile fear” that motivates us to flee sin because we fear punishment; third, the movement of hope in which, hoping to gain pardon for sin, one purposes to amend one’s ways; fourth, the movement of charity in which we come to be displeased with sin because it is wrong and not just because we

\textsuperscript{14} Lonergan, \textit{Grace and Freedom}, 126-127.

\textsuperscript{15} See Lonergan, \textit{Grace and Freedom}, 135n72.

\textsuperscript{16} ST III 85.5.

\textsuperscript{17} Lonergan, \textit{Grace and Freedom}, 128-129.
fear being punished for sinning; and, fifth, the movement of “filial fear” in which one voluntarily tries to amend one’s ways out of reverence for God.18

Lonergan makes three important observations concerning the operative—cooperative sequence. First, the cooperative sequence establishes and develops a psychological continuity in God’s work of grace.19 We are not converted to God entirely in one moment. The basis of our ultimate conversion may be instantaneous, but there is a progression of psychological operations in which we, step by step, come closer to God.

Second, the initial, operative, step is distinguished from the later, cooperative steps in that it does not have an intellectually apprehended object:

The first act does not presuppose any object apprehended by the intellect; God acts directly on the radical orientation of the will. On the other hand the acts of faith, of servile fear, and of hope obviously presuppose an intellectual apprehension.20

One has to have the outer word of God’s revelation (for example, the Holy Scriptures) in order to believe that word. If one is afraid as a slave, one has some apprehension of one’s master. If one has some hope of pardon, one must have some apprehension of a moral code, of promises of pardon or a master’s love as a basis for the possible pardon. These operations have intellectually apprehended objects. The direct motion of God to change our will does not.

This explanation of Aquinas, in terms of a change of the will’s orientation without any intellectually apprehended cause, has clear affinities with the teaching of Ignatius (as interpreted by Rahner) on consolation without a cause. In the most important case, the sure basis for election is not a love from God apprehended by the

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subject but is the conversion of the subject into one who is in love with God.

Subsequent to this change, one can cooperate with God’s work. One also wants to do so, in that one is motivated by that love.

Third, the movement of the will constitutes a change in the will’s regular way of operation in which it comes to operate in relation to the operation of the intellect in a new way. As Lonergan says,

Further, conversion is the cause of the other acts; it is their primum principium in the passage quoted, and in the ad tertium from it proceeds servile fear. … Thus there appears a notable parallel between habitual grace and actual as operative and cooperative: in both cases operative grace changes the radical orientation of the will, moto moventis, and then the changed will responds in a new way to the apprehensions of intellect, motus mobilis.21

In this way, the working of the will comes to be placed on a new basis (principle).

Not only does it have a new end, but it is therefore able to respond differently in all its deliberations. Such a change is a radical orientation—a new, regular way of operating based on a new root principle of the will, actuated by supernatural grace.

The notion of conversion in Grace and Freedom lays a necessary groundwork for more powerful notions of conversion in Lonergan’s later works.22 While the term occurs rarely in Insight, and only then in quite restricted contexts, Lonergan soon begins to use “conversion” in explaining what he was after in Insight.23 The notion of

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21 Lonergan, Grace and Freedom 128.


23 See Lonergan, Insight, 15 and 764 for uses of conversion in Insight. For Lonergan’s use of conversion to explain his work in Insight, see “Insight: Preface to a Discussion,” in Lonergan, Collection, 148n10. As the editors of Collection note, Lonergan, in a 1972 address, would state that “Insight insists a great deal … on the importance … of intellectual conversion.” Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran in Lonergan, Collection, 287n1. For the development of the notion of conversion in Lonergan’s middle period (including Insight but before 1965), see Rende, Lonergan on Conversion, 51-106.
philosophical or intellectual conversion that begins to appear in this period leads toward his full development of conversion in his later writings.\textsuperscript{24}

Conversion in Lonergan’s Later Writings

Conversion, fully developed, takes center stage in \textit{Method in Theology}. Conversion, in \textit{Method}, means “a transformation of the subject and his world.”\textsuperscript{25} This transformation normally takes place over an extended period as a “slow process of maturation,” but may be crystallized in a few judgments and decisions of great moment.\textsuperscript{26}

In our lives, conversion is a sea-change in the operation of the human spirit. It is not a further development along the lines of our current way of thinking and choosing.\textsuperscript{27} We turn around and walk a better way.\textsuperscript{28} One could consider “going right” or “finally getting it right” to be an augmentation or improvement of what we are already doing. When speaking of conversion, Lonergan does not mean that. We have to change. What we already are and what we already are doing will, if amplified, simply get us into a bigger set of difficulties. We need a different principle of operation.

On the basis of conversion, we experience the emergence of “something new that fructifies in inter-locking, cumulative sequences of developments on all levels

\textsuperscript{24} As Frederick Lawrence notes, by 1958, Lonergan “acknowledged that the habitual—‘constant and sedulous’—exercise of correct judgment does not take place without a conversion.” Lawrence, “Hermeneutic Revolution,” 348.

\textsuperscript{25} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 130.

\textsuperscript{26} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 130 and 253.

\textsuperscript{27} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 130.

\textsuperscript{28} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 52.
and in all departments of human living.”29 Just as bias thoroughly corrupts all our thinking and choosing, in conversion we experience the growing right relation and right operation of who we are as human subjects, once we have repented.30 Conversion directs our gaze, pervades our imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of our psyche.31 It provides the new principle we need for achieving authenticity because it puts our operations of experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding on a new basis.

Conversion is something that happens to individual human subjects, but it can have great effects in human societies, as well. It is an “existential, intensely personal, utterly intimate” set of transformations.32 However, we live as social beings. In that the operations of conscious intentionality are regular, recurrent and consistent from one person to another, similar transformations in their operation can take place among people living in society.33 In that case, these people can form communities that preserve and foster conversion, communities that provide a context in which converted people help each other in “working out the implications and fulfilling the promise of their new life.”34 Like calls to like, and converted people have an affinity toward each other that encourages and aids their cooperation.

As communal and historical, conversion “becomes a movement with its own cultural, institutional and doctrinal dimensions ….”35 It thereby becomes a fit subject

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29 Lonergan, Method, 130.
30 See Lonergan, Method, 117-118.
31 Lonergan, Method, 131.
32 Lonergan, Method, 130.
33 Lonergan, Method, 130.
34 Lonergan, Method, 130.
35 Lonergan, Method, 131.
for historical analysis, for the kind of reflection that explores in the working of communities conversion’s character and origin, the progress it makes and what it fails to do. Conversion, experienced by the individual and in the shaping of communities and sometimes societies, can become objectified. It can therefore become the objective basis for other kinds of analysis and reflection.\(^{36}\)

Conversion is foundational for the establishment of a new horizon.\(^{37}\) Horizons, as I explained in chapter three, are constituted by our potential for self-transcendence. Conversion supplies a fundamental orientation that guides the way our horizons are established.\(^{38}\) It involves a vertical exercise of freedom in which a revolution has occurred and we choose a more comprehensive horizon.\(^{39}\) We turn away from our former limitedness and choose or experience self-transcendence.\(^{40}\)

In his formulation of human knowing in *Insight*, Lonergan had drawn on John Henry Newman’s illative sense in order to formulate the notion of judgment.\(^{41}\) In judgment, one makes an unconditioned assent based on a number of factors, none of which absolutely compel the judgment to be made (for, our judgments are not mechanical but require an apprehension of sufficient evidence), but which reflective or indirect insight grasps as sufficient to answer the questions relevant to the judgment.\(^{42}\) As Frederick Lawrence explains, in developing the full notion of

\(^{36}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 131. As he states here, conversion becomes the basis for the fifth functional specialty, Foundations.


\(^{38}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 142.


\(^{40}\) See Lawrence, “Hermeneutic Revolution,” 348.


conversion, Lonergan integrated this basic account of Newman’s (which was fundamental for Lonergan’s own project) that human knowing is “a whole whose parts are organically related” with the notion of horizon as explicated by modern phenomenology.  

How do we come, truly, to be open to the warrants offered, whether they may be for or against us? How can we seek the most intelligent solutions, given the phenomena to which we are attentive, given the way our intelligence is shaped by our historical—cultural framework? How can our judgments (analogically, at least) know reality? How can the choices we make not be merely the sediment of bias, of our own self-interest and the spirit of our age? To operate in these ways—to be, authentically—is not the work of pure reason. An abstract pure reason would be crippled by these concerns, circumscribed much more thoroughly than even Kant imagined. But, a social and historical subject operating on the basis of conversion—a radical change in orientation in which the operation of our moral and intelligent being is directed toward being and value in a consistent way—could on that basis live in a horizon in which authenticity and self-transcendence could more and more characterize her existence.

The actuation of our self-transcendence, then, and the operation of our conscious intentionality that occurs within our horizons, depend greatly on conversion. Conversion is the radical revision of our former way of thinking and

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44 See Lonergan, Method, 122 and 340. Again, also see Lawrence, “Hermeneutic Revolution,” 348.

45 Lawrence, “Hermeneutic Revolution,” 348, points out the (at least implicit) connection of “orientation” here with the philosophy of Heidegger.
choosing whose presence grounds the formulation of our horizons.\textsuperscript{46} It establishes us in a new horizon in which we experience more attentively, understand more intelligently, judge more reasonably and decide more responsibly. In all of this, we come to love in a way we did not love before.\textsuperscript{47}

Conversion, like bias, can be understood in relation to emergent probability. Conversions significantly affect the probability schedules according to which we move from what we have been to what we may become. Whereas previously our probability schedules were dominated by the dynamics of sin, as the result of conversion they can come to be dominated by dynamics informed by wisdom and righteousness. Each conversion affects the probability schedules that regulate our development in a different way, and I will discuss them in turn, below.

In this section so far, “conversion” in Lonergan’s late authorship has been heuristically defined. “Conversion” is the $X$ whose advent accomplishes or renders likely each of the above momentous things. To give content to this heuristic definition, one must look specifically at each of the conversions Lonergan describes.

**Religious Conversion**

As should be clear by now, Lonergan did not believe that knowledge equals virtue. It is one thing to realize that one should live in authenticity. It is quite another thing to do it. It is another thing, still, to have that authenticity characterize one’s life.

\textsuperscript{46} Lonergan, *Method*, 338.

\textsuperscript{47} Lonergan, *Method*, 242.
Religious Conversion and Religious Experience

Lonergan’s answer to this difficulty is that humans receive the dynamic orientation that draws us to authenticity through the gift of God’s love. “As the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfillment of all our conscious intentionality.” In order for our conscious intentionality to reach authenticity, the functioning of our consciousness must be healed and elevated by God’s love.

Lonergan refers to this reception of God’s love as religious conversion. As he says in *Method*,

> Questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation reveal the eros of the human spirit, its capacity and its drive for self-transcendence. But that capacity meets fulfillment, that desire turns to joy, when religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so otherworldly love. Then there is a new basis for all valuing and all doing good.

Religious conversion is thus the gift of self-transcendence toward a reality beyond any possible human horizon.

These descriptions draw on Lonergan’s descriptions of religious experience, with good reason. Religious conversion is the reception of God’s love. It is religious experience in the terms that Otto, Tillich and Ignatius (via Rahner) described. In religious conversion one’s feelings become shaped and transformed by engagement with the awe-full and fascinating mystery. Our horizons are reshaped in that the concern that constitutes them becomes ultimate concern, a change that results in different relations to lesser concerns. Most of all, religious conversion is the

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supernatural religious experience in which the subject is transformed into one who is in love with God. As “consolation without a cause,” religious conversion is not an experience of a particular reality, an understanding reached, a judgment assessed, or a choice made. It is the change of who we are as the people who are experiencing, understanding, judging and choosing. As Frederick Lawrence has remarked, it is a change in our horizon of expectation in which we come to love what we did not love before. By God’s direct action, we become different, oriented toward and grasped by supernatural love.

Lonergan’s account of religious conversion also draws on Maslow. Religious conversion is a peak experience, or it acts in a way analogous to one. In Maslow’s analysis, people who have peak experiences receive the temporary ability to act as self-actualized people, even though they are not normally that. Religious conversion, being changed by God’s love, acts as a peak experience or peak dynamic state that changes our moral being. It establishes in us a dynamic of growth-motivation in which we are oriented toward transcendent value and thereby to self-transcendence.

51 Lonergan said in this regard,
One of the oldest convictions of spiritual writers and directors is that religious experiences are highly ambiguous. What really reveals the man or woman is not inner experience but outward deed. As scripture put it, ‘By their fruits you shall know them’ (Matthew 7.16).
Hence, if anyone wishes to ascertain whether he loves God, he is not to attempt psychological introspection, but he is to consider his own palpable behavior. A person can be profoundly in love with God yet fail to find it in inner experience. As Professor Maslow put it, most people do have peak experiences, but most of them are not aware of the fact. Psychological introspection is a highly difficult art.
Now being in love with God, if not a peak experience, at least is a peak state, indeed a peak dynamic state.
Note the connection to moral behavior; religious conversion is best known as the change in our lives that undergirds our moral being. Bernard Lonergan, “Self-Transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious,” 326.

52 As Lonergan says (Method, 105), our capacity for self-transcendence becomes an actuality when we fall in love.
Then one’s being becomes being-in-love. Such being-in-love has its antecedents, its causes, its conditions, it occasions. But once it has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts, it takes over. It is the first principle. From it flow one’s desires and fears, one’s joys and sorrows, one’s discernment of values, one’s decisions and deeds.
Religious Conversion and the Horizon of Faith

Religious conversion is the divine gift of love that grounds the horizon of faith. It is the apprehension of transcendent value, the reason of the heart, which trans-values all other values. In religious conversion, we overcome what is possible for us naturally and receive the basis for participation in supernatural life.

In my earlier discussion of faith, I could not bring out this relation in its fullness because I had not yet discussed Lonergan’s view of sin. The total transformation of human living characterized by living in the horizon of faith involves the reversal of our previous dynamics. That is what makes it a conversion. Religious conversion makes our entry into the horizon of faith possible. The horizon of faith makes possible the correction of bias. It makes possible the overcoming of our radical unauthenticity, alienation, absurdity, decline.⁵³

Additionally, faith makes it possible to credit the reality of God in this darkened world. “Without faith, without the eye of love, the world is too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist.”⁵⁴ Faith, the transcendent horizon whose possibility is established by religious conversion, gives us the ability to believe that this world is ultimately under the control of wisdom and not absurdity. Faith, grounded by religious conversion, grounds our efforts to live well and improve both the world and ourselves. It gives our achievements ultimate significance, as they can be known to be not merely the strivings of clever animals, whose significance will be

Because of the new orientation toward transcendent value, we act in a way (self-transcendent) that we would otherwise have been unable to act (either consistently or at all).


lost in the death of our sun.\textsuperscript{55} Faith gives meaning to human freedom as it relates us to the wise and loving governance of the world by God.

One could postulate a reception of God’s love in an un-fallen created being. Such a reception would still constitute the actuation of an obediential potency, in that no created being is proportionate to the love of God. We, however, know sin. For us, the reception of God’s love is a conversion that brings about both elevation and healing.

As the actuation of an obediential potency toward receiving divine life, turning us from sin and establishing in us an orientation toward supernatural value, religious conversion is only notionally distinct from sanctifying grace.\textsuperscript{56} If two terms are only notionally distinct, that means that they refer to the same reality from within different thought-frameworks. “Sanctifying grace” refers to this transformation in the thought-framework of Thomist theology. “Religious conversion” expresses this intelligibility in the horizon of transcendental method. Sanctifying grace could be used in a way that does not include cognitively knowable events. Even in the framework of faculty psychology, Lonergan did not consider sanctifying grace to be this way (he opposed purely entitative supernaturality). However, religious conversion is the “dynamic state of being in love with God,” and therefore explicitly includes knowable events.\textsuperscript{57} In fact, the term “religious conversion” takes its meaning from this experience.


\textsuperscript{56} Lonergan, Method, 107.

\textsuperscript{57} Lonergan, Method, 107.
Religious Conversion and Love

What kind of love, then, grounds the theological term, religious conversion? In *Method*, when discussing religious conversion, Lonergan differentiates three different types of love: first there is intimate love, which refers to the love shared between spouses and family members; second, there is the more general love for one’s fellow human beings and our common accomplishments; third, there is the love mandated by the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30), the love of God with one’s whole being.58 The third type of love is constitutive of religious conversion.

“Love” is used analogically in these three instances. The third is differentiated from the first two in that it is “without conditions or qualifications or reserve.”59 Loving any creature this way is idolatry.60 This fact reinforces that this third type of love must be “otherworldly.”61 It cannot have an intellectually apprehended object that is within this world, for nothing in this world deserves such unlimited concern; nor could any finite being actuate our potency toward the absolutely supernatural.62

Such love, though otherworldly, is still experiential. Religious conversion may involve an obvious incident, a moment of clear turning and drama such as the Apostle Paul experience on the Damascus Road. However it may also be “revealed in retrospect as an under-tow of existential consciousness, as a fated acceptance of a

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58 Lonergan, *Method*, 105. See also, Lonergan, “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” 179, in which Lonergan refers to “knowledge of affectivity in its threefold manifestation of love in the family, loyalty in the community, and faith in God.”


60 One is reminded of Tillich’s analysis of mistaking lesser concerns for ultimate concern.


62 As Ignatius would remind us, such is the prerogative of the Creator, who acts directly on our souls, transforming them.
vocation to holiness, as perhaps an increasing simplicity and passivity in prayer.”⁶³

Whether clear from the first moment, or only analyzable to a mature person after many years, religious conversion is a dynamic state that forms the basis for other acts and operations.⁶⁴

As a righteous phenomenon, then, religious conversion is an apprehension of supernatural value, something that grounds an orientation in our conscious operations toward ultimate self transcendence. In his interpretation of Lonergan, Walter Conn draws out the way that this self-transcending love involves our feelings.⁶⁵ It is affective self-transcendence that draws us spontaneously to act for the good of another person. When this affective transformation becomes being-in-love, we are forgetful of our egoism and become engaged with the wider horizon of what is truly of value.

Conn notes, “By ‘love’ Lonergan clearly means the active, other-oriented principle of beneficence and benevolence, but this meaning is confused by his use of the phrase ‘falling-in-love’ with all its connotations of passivity and sentimentality.”⁶⁶

The motivation to enact this beneficence and benevolence is mediated to us through

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⁶⁵ Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 134-153. Conn here discusses what he terms “affective conversion.” This term occurs in Lonergan’s authorship in his 1977 lecture, published as “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” 179. In the paragraph in which it occurs, affective conversion is part of a trio: intellectual, moral and affective conversion. The description of this conversion includes familial love, community loyalty and “faith in the destiny of man.” When discussing the three loves (or affections) earlier in the essay (page 175), Lonergan uses “faith in God” instead of “faith in the destiny of man.” His description of the love connected with faith in God is nearly verbatim with some of his descriptions of religious conversion in *Method* (for example, *Method*, 105). It seems reasonable to take “affective conversion” as a later term that includes what Lonergan described as “religious conversion” in *Method*. Conn does so (*Christian Conversion*, 134 and 316n57-58), thereby both indicating the essential affective component of religious conversion (in *Method*) and that religious conversion (in *Method*) does not necessarily involve becoming a convert to any world religion. I think Conn’s analysis on this point is valid and helpful, although I prefer Lonergan’s earlier language of “religious conversion;” the terminology used in *Method* preserves as central the character of the reality describes as a gift of God that draws us to God.

feelings. The feelings, however, do not force the conversion; self-transcendence is a choice, and is not automatically achieved no matter how highly motivated.  

However, in religious conversion, we receive the motivation to live in a way we formerly did not because our desires have been transformed. I will explain Lonergan’s view of feelings and the way they affect our moral (real) self-transcendence in chapters seven and eight.

Religious Conversion as Grace

Religious conversion is a gift. Lonergan clearly identifies it as an operative grace (an effect caused by God alone acting on us without our cooperation). In that he is using the term “religious conversion” as materially the same as sanctifying grace, it must be operative.  

In Christian terms, Lonergan described this operative grace using two main Scriptures. First, religious conversion is the love of God flooding our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Second, it is God’s replacing our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19). In both of these cases, God’s action is utterly gratuitous and not dependent on human choice. First, the love of God flooding our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit is dependent on our justification by the work of Christ (Romans 5:1-2). Second, the

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67 See Conn, 316-317n59. In this endnote, Conn explains the difference between his notion of affective conversion and Robert Doran’s notion of psychic conversion.

68 One can note the striking difference in Lonergan’s explanation of being-in-love as the way humans overcome unauthenticity versus Heidegger’s espousal of being-unto-death.


70 See Stebbins, Divine Initiative, 127-128 and 295-299. Despite giving full credence to human free will, Lonergan was not in any respect a Pelagian.

71 See, for example, Method, 241, and “Horizons,” 26-27.
replacement of the heart of stone is “beyond the horizon of the heart of stone.”

Dominated by sin, we do not wish to repent and cannot recognize the good when it comes to us. Religious conversion, God’s operative grace, moves us to choose not just the good but an absolutely supernatural end. It allows us to live in the horizon of faith.

Although religious conversion is an operative grace, it can also become cooperative. “Cooperative grace is the effectiveness of conversion, the gradual movement toward a full and complete transformation of the whole of one’s living and feeling, one’s thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions.” Lonergan here draws on his earlier historical work on Aquinas, in which the same actual grace is understood to be both operative and cooperative depending on its effects. Insofar as actual grace operates without our contribution, it is operative. When this same grace allows or prompts our cooperation, it is cooperative.

The example Lonergan gives of this dynamic is from the Apostle Peter. At the Last Supper, Peter declared total allegiance to Christ, even if everyone else should fail; he, of course, did not fulfill his promise that very night. However, at the end of his life, as prophesied by Jesus in his restoration of Peter, Peter lived out the commitment he had made as he suffered martyrdom. In both cases, the Apostle

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74 Lonergan, Grace and Freedom, 129-132; Lonergan refers to his earlier work in this regard in Method, 241n2.


76 See Mark 14:27-31, 66-72.

Peter was acting subject to the same religious conversion; the first case demonstrates its operative inception, the second its cooperative fruition.

Religious conversion, the gift of a dynamic orientation toward transcendent mystery, does not destroy the psychological continuity of the recipient. It can be preceded by temporary works of grace that move the disposition of the future recipient toward religious conversion. Without yet being brought to within the horizon of faith, we are moved toward a place where that transition will not be too violent for us to sustain.

Also, once established, religious conversion is “filled out and developed further” by additional works of grace. The life of faith is not lived by religious conversion alone; in every way, the religiously converted subject still needs the grace of God. Lonergan here again draws on his historical examination of Aquinas’ grace theology. As Lonergan explains, the action of grace is needed to change our mere good intentions into effective willing. These subsequent graces are not identical with sanctifying grace; even the sanctified still need to pray. Religious conversion establishes the possibility of the horizon of faith. To make choices in line with the orientation toward supernatural value, however, is still not natural for even a converted subject. In developing the maturity shown by the martyr Peter: we grow, are purified and must depend, always, on God’s gift of love and further works of grace.

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78 Lonergan, Method, 107.
80 Lonergan, Grace and Freedom, 139.
Religious Conversion as Basis

By identifying religious conversion with the gift of sanctifying grace,
Lonergan proposed that this dynamic state of being in love with God is the
transcultural basis for all authentic religion.\(^82\) Lonergan used the phenomenological
studies of Friedrich Heiler to show the experiential grounds for this assertion.\(^83\)
Heiler proposed seven areas common to the experience of the adherents to the major
world religions:

- That there is a transcendent reality; that he is immanent in human
  hearts; that he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness; that
  he is love, mercy, compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-
  denial, prayer; that the way is love of one’s neighbor, even of one’s
  enemies; that the way is love of God, so that bliss is conceived as
  knowledge of God, union with him, or dissolution into him.\(^84\)

Lonergan interpreted each of these areas of commonality as implicit in being in love
unrestrictedly.\(^85\) For example, being in love in an unrestricted manner, a manner that
implies total self-sacrifice and undying commitment, implies that there must be
someone worthy or able to receive such love: a transcendent reality.

In this way, Lonergan identified a transcultural basis for all authentic religion
that is experientially based, not pre-supposed by metaphysical necessity. As with
Otto and Tillich, any genuine religious or theological language must have a basis in
the awe-full and fascinating mystery, in ultimate concern, in religious conversion.
Lonergan recognized a sufficient basis for such common religious experience in the


\(^84\) The following quote is from Lonergan’s summary of Heiler in *Method*, 109. He gives a
near-identical summary in “Horizons,” 41. Both lists refer to Friedrich Heiler, “The History of
Religions as a Preparation for the Cooperation of Religions,” in *The History of Religions, Essays in
Methodology*, ed. by Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
1959), 142-153.

“antecedent probability that God is good and gives to all men sufficient grace for salvation.” However, he believed that one could proceed to ground and give meaning to this theology experientially, and that Heiler’s findings were helpful in that regard.

This component of Lonergan’s thought has been subject to criticism. While I am trying to interpret Lonergan in this work, not criticize or defend him, I think it is important to look at the significant criticism of Lonergan in this regard. Doing so, I believe, will help understand Lonergan better.

Philip Mueller, for example, asserts that Lonergan’s “transcultural” grounding of authentic religion in being-in-love flows from Lonergan’s system, not from a genuine engagement with religious data. Mueller supports this assertion by noting religious experiences which he does not believe can properly be called being-in-love: “guilt, despair, anxious absence of God, the isolation of spirit from cosmos and history, sudden illuminations, the identity of self and God, cosmic harmony and ecstatic enthusiasms.” Instead of proceeding from a base of experience, Mueller believes that Lonergan’s insistence on being-in-love as transcultural base comes from the exigencies of Lonergan’s cognitional theory.

Religious and mystical experiences, Mueller claims, are simply too varied and ambiguous to yield the results Lonergan produces. Because of the demands of Lonergan’s cosmology, Mueller asserts that Lonergan promotes those understandings

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that are sympathetic to cosmic order and intelligibility. In this “essentialistic absence of ambiguity,” Mueller asserts that Lonergan takes up Pascal’s reasons of the heart but ignores his terror at the silence of the eternal spaces.\footnote{Mueller, “Lonergan,” 250.} According to Mueller, Lonergan’s cognitional theory again determines this choice, not religious data.\footnote{Mueller, “Lonergan,” 251.}

Regarding Mueller’s claims, a number of observations are relevant, one’s which I hope will aid in my task of understanding Lonergan’s intent. First, Lonergan did not deny mystery in his theology; however, it is right to say he emphasized intelligibility much more.\footnote{As Lonergan says concerning his dealing with mystery in his writings, “But mystery remains. When you talk, you’re not aiming at communicating a mystery. But you don’t dispel it either. Rahner emphasizes mystery a lot. I have a few clear things to say.” Bernard Lonergan, “Interview,” 229. A theologian in the tradition of Thomas Aquinas always stresses the superabundance of intelligibility in the mystery of God.} Lonergan’s attempt to communicate clearly what he knew (not what he did not), and his confidence in the ultimate intelligibility of the universe, can strike the reader as dispensing the mystery from the world and from transcendence into clear and distinct categories of thought.

Nevertheless, retaining such an apprehension of Lonergan’s thought would mistake the apophatic character of his theology.\footnote{A similar mistake can be made by readers of Aquinas, before realizing the extent of his citation of and sympathy with Pseudo-Dionysius.} Lonergan’s systematic explanation of Pascal’s reasons of the heart is balanced by his approbation of the Cloud of Unknowing.\footnote{Lonergan, Method, 266 and 342.} Lonergan especially approved the interpretation given to the Cloud by William Johnston, an expert in Japanese mysticism.\footnote{Lonergan refers to Johnston, Cloud.} In his work, Johnston differentiated between the mysticism of the Cloud and that of Zen Buddhism.\footnote{Johnson, Cloud, 17-30.} In the
mysticism of the Cloud, the knowledge of God is hidden from us; as we ascend closer to God, God is hidden from our minds. But the working of our reason in this world is stirred (motivated) by love, which may reach God in this life.97 Lonergan’s theology concludes that the world ultimately is intelligible (as I explained above in his Augustinian doctrine of evil). However, in the experiential basis of his theology, Lonergan recognized something much stronger than the silence of the eternal spaces. He recognized that in our best strivings toward the divine, we can be met by ignorance, forgetfulness of being, an unknowing that envelopes us. Such is not an “essentialistic” flight from ambiguity.

Second, the experience of being-in-love that Lonergan describes can be a more experientially varied thing than Mueller expects. Religious conversion gives one the horizon within which questions of God are meaningful. What Lonergan means by this is that to anyone who regularly talks with people about transcendence or God, there is an apparent difference between those who consider discussions of transcendence or God to be in some way relevant and those who have no place for them.98 Some people simply have no idea that there can be any significance to questions about transcendence; others are awake to the discussion, though their ideas about it may differ tremendously. “Religious conversion” is the term Lonergan judges appropriate for understanding this observable difference.

In the terms of the major world religions, or even in terms of philosophies that have no understood place for religion, religious conversion amounts to the state of those who are alive, awake, reasonable, responsive to teaching, spiritual, obedient from the heart, or experiencing enlightenment, versus those who are not. In some

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97 See Johnson, Cloud, 117-125.

way, those who experience religious conversion say, “Yes,” to ultimate reality.99 Lonergan’s choice of the language of “being-in-love” does seem prompted by Christian doctrine. But, I think it is a reasonable choice of wording concerning the difference between not being aware of transcendence at all and having that transcendence as (at least) a continually engaging undertow in one’s conscious intentionality.

Third, does Lonergan’s understanding come from a study of religious data or from the exigencies of his system? In my estimation, Mueller’s accusation in this regard constitutes an ad hominem argument. It is characteristic of the postmodern suspicion of meta-narratives. Ad hominem arguments, however, are not philosophically valid. The valid question is, “On reflection, do the data of experience support Lonergan’s analysis?” And, “No matter what his prior theology would lead him to expect, is Lonergan intelligent and reasonable in his analysis of the data?”

In this regard, it seems to me fair to say that Lonergan thoroughly engaged the best data that he had access to. Friedrich Heiler, William Johnston, Mircea Eliade and Wilfrid Cantwell Smith are significant dialogue partners in the phenomenology and history of religion, as are Oliver Rabut and Antoine Vergote in the phenomenology of religious experience. Lonergan drew on their research and interacted with Smith directly.100 It also seems fair to me to say that the examination and comparison of religion is a field that has grown since Lonergan’s day.101 While I would not claim

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99 As Charles Hefling has remarked, religious conversion is answering, “Yes,” to the question that you are.

100 See Lonergan, “Faith and Beliefs,” 30n1. For Rabut and Vergote, see Lonergan, Method, 290, 290n17 and 290n18.

101 See, in particular, the development of the field of comparative theology, spearheaded by such authors as Francis Clooney. See Francis Clooney, Seeing Through Texts: Doing Theology Among the Śrīvaishnavaś of South India, SUNY Series, Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions (Albany: State University of New York, 1996).
that the newer findings of the field invalidate Lonergan’s analysis (to the contrary, I think much support is to be found), a contemporary appropriation of Lonergan’s theological method would do well to interact with these fresh sources. Lonergan himself pointed to a lack of a comprehensive phenomenological study of religion and religious experience, and his method will only be strengthened by the addition of further insights.102

If our postmodern ears are pricked by Lonergan’s assessment of religious conversion as the transcultural basis of authentic religion, they must be scandalized by his statement that conversion constitutes the objective basis for a unified theology. One of the most momentous affirmations of Method in Theology is exactly this.103 Lonergan identifies the three conversions (religious, moral, intellectual) as the basis for an objectively valid foundation for theology, with religious conversion the most basic of the three.104 How the three conversions, taken together, can serve as an objectively valid foundation will be clearer after I have explained all three. The most important thing about the foundation Lonergan is proposing is that it has to do not with a foundational fact one knows but with methodically reflective control of the fundamental process that one is.

To take a contrary example, Descartes famously sought a foundation from which philosophy can proceed, finally arriving at a fact he could not doubt.105 This foundational fact, “I think, therefore I am,” served as the first proposition in all the remaining propositions Descartes proposed. The problems with envisioning

103 Lonergan, Method, 267-271.
104 Lonergan, Method, 267-268.
philosophy as a set of propositions, grounded by something like the *Cogito* are manifest to anyone who has studied developments in postmodernism over the last hundred years (Who or what is this “I” you speak of? Is there anything clear and distinct about it to do the thinking? Is it a social/economic/historical product, not a self-verifying reality? What about “am?” Do you think you have real access to being?). As long as theology or philosophy are understood as sets of propositions that need a certain first proposition for their validity, that validity will radically come into question when the process of questioning they express casts performative doubt on whatever is chosen as the first proposition.¹⁰⁶

Lonergan proposed something different. He explained human understanding as an “ongoing, developing reality.”¹⁰⁷ What he judged as needed was an adequate way of understanding the process of human understanding and deciding and a recognizably valid way of establishing norms for this process.¹⁰⁸ The adequate way to understand the process of human knowledge and choice is the four phases of intentional consciousness—experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding—that are productive of our knowledge and choices.

As I explained in chapter two, this process is a set of operations immanently verifiable for anyone who can be trained to consider herself carefully. Lonergan did not think it open to radical revision.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the fundamental fact Descartes tried to discover, anyone calling into question the process of human understanding Lonergan describes will necessarily use that very process in the questioning. Furthermore,

when this process operates correctly, it is productive of knowledge and right choices. As the history of human civilizations demonstrates, despite our many deficiencies, we are capable of genuine achievement.

“When this process operates correctly”—that is the key. For, as I described in the section on sin, our processes very often do not operate correctly. Some factor that is beyond the reach of sin, or greater than it, is needful for us. But, no merely human reality is beyond the reach of sin, and it seems that sin is able thoroughly to corrupt all that we are.

But conversion grounds the right operation of our consciousness. In conversion, by grace, one turns away from sin and illusion and acts rightly. As Lonergan says,

Foundational reality, as distinct from its expression, is conversion: religious, moral, and intellectual. Normally it is intellectual conversion as the fruit of both religious and moral conversion; it is moral conversion as the fruit of religious conversion; and it is religious conversion as the fruit of God’s gift of his grace.

In this series of conversions, the subject experiences a monumental change in the human reality she is. One experiences a revision of one’s horizons toward authenticity. This change is sufficient to reverse the absurdity of sin because (and only because) it is founded on God’s grace. The created communication of the divine nature is, by its source, free from sin and able to overcome sin’s effects in our conscious operations.

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Religious experience productive of religious conversion, then, becomes the *sine qua non* of valid theological reflection. Here, again, “religious experience” must be taken in the full sense indicated, incorporating the insights of Maslow, Otto, Tillich and Ignatius/Rahner. Religious conversion does not provide any one fact that theology can build on; rather, it orients the theologian toward authenticity in self-transcendence by making his being being-in-love. By grounding the process of theological reflection through a transformation of the theologians, religious conversion produces a foundation on which there is hope for a more unified theology.

Religious conversion provides an objective basis for theology because it brings about the possibility of authentic subjectivity. In the world mediated by meaning, in which theological doctrines and systematic reflections live, objectivity is authentic subjectivity. There is no mechanical, automatic, set of rules to follow to achieve truth and virtue. However, authentic subjectivity does bring one to be more attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible. Attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsible action over time bring about true knowledge and moral achievement. By grace, religious conversion orients one toward acting in this way, because knowing, caring about and choosing in favor of the other is a natural thing for someone in love.

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114 As indicated, not just religious but all three conversions are necessary for genuine hope for a unified theology. Additionally, there are questions of the theologians’ stage of development and of their cultures. Furthermore, there is the great question of authenticity—does the theologian live out what she has attained? Finally, religious conversion does not operate independently, it involves correlation with the outer word of one’s tradition. However, given all these *caveats*, at least Lonergan has identified some one coherent and solid basis for working toward theological unity in which progress can be not just experienced but expected.

The Inner and Outer Words of Grace

As I mentioned in my discussion of faith, Lonergan differentiates between the inner word of God’s grace, received immediately, and the outer word of God’s grace, received through our traditions. Religious conversion is an inner word of grace. However, it does not operate independently of outer words of grace; we are historical and cultural beings and never separate from our traditions. Also, a love that is only internal, frozen or un-avowed, has not properly become love—the self-donation of love freely reveals itself and unfolds in a life that is changed in determinate ways.  

Frederick Lawrence explains the interplay between the inner and outer words of God’s grace, saying,

In being converted, in repentance, we enter a conversation within what might be called redemptive tension as we experience the interplay between inner word (gift of the Spirit) and outer word (Jesus, who lived, suffered, died, and rose again) in the process of ongoing conversion, since conversion as a Christian involves a two-sided response to God’s outgoing love: a response to the operative grace of conversion that bestows a universal antecedent willingness through the gift of the Spirit; and a (not necessarily separate) response to the outer word of the Risen Lord.

Conversation with the outer word has a redemptive function, in which we come to know ourselves as sinners, receive the message and actuality of forgiveness, receive the strength to repent, and receive a new identity as redeemed ones. Conversation with the outer word also has a constitutive function, in which the stories by which one lives become healed and elevated by incorporation into the story of redemption. The outer word of tradition with which one comes to be in conversation will be

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118 Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 262.
119 Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 262-263. Lawrence indicates that his explanation of Lonergan here draws on the writings of J. B. Metz and Rowan Williams.
affected by one’s social-historical situation. Lonergan most often spells out the implications of religious conversion in the context of Christianity, as Lawrence does above.\textsuperscript{120} However, in that religious conversion is the transcultural basis of all authentic religion, and in that Lonergan did not consider authentic religion entirely to be restricted to Christianity, religious conversion must be able to be appropriated, in some relatively adequate way, in the terms of the other world religions and even in philosophies that do not acknowledge religion.\textsuperscript{121} In any case, our willingness to engage the outer word of religious tradition, the self-transcending requirements of philosophy, and the fundamental meaning of those outer words to us, is based on religious conversion.

**Emergent Probability**

One can use emergent probability to understand religious conversion. Prior to religious conversion, we have preference scales characterized by the lack of love. Through an apprehension of transcendent value, we receive preference scales oriented toward self-transcendence. We receive the possibility of choosing supernatural value, which we did not have before. We receive the “universal antecedent willingness” Lawrence spoke of, that gives us a greater likelihood of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible, because we have an anchoring apprehension of and orientation toward transcendent value.

The orientation toward transcendent value, then, becomes a condition for the rectitude of our conscious operations. It changes the way we come to affective insights, replacing our prior responses to value with responses appropriate to the

\textsuperscript{120} See, for example, Lonergan, *Method*, 118-119.

horizon of faith. It provides motivation to know reality and choose what is of value, because we are oriented toward supernatural being and goodness. Thereby, religious conversion has a proper (direct) relation to the operations of our consciousness in the fourth phase of conscious intentionality, and it has an improper (remote) relation to the operations of consciousness in the first three phases of conscious intentionality. Without this orientation, it is possible for our conscious operations to follow the transcendental precepts (be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible); however, it is improbable. “It is love and hatred that makes values and disvalues really effective.” Given religious conversion, it becomes more probable that we will follow the transcendental precepts, because we have motivation to do so.

Undoing Decline

Religious conversion thereby provides the basis for undoing decline. Progress requires a creative operation of the human subject in each of the four phases of conscious intentionality. “Only a transformation of man’s willingness, a healing at his core can release again the energies of creativity.” The operative grace of religious conversion is the inception of this healing, and the cooperative grace of religious conversion furthers this healing in the horizon of faith. Religious conversion, by itself, does not undo the biases that lead to decline, as I will discuss below under moral conversion. However, it does provide the principle that allows the correcting of bias to take place.

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Freedom and Authenticity

Religious conversion can be refused. The gift of God’s love is an operative grace, and in the moment of reception God does it and we enjoy it. However, Lonergan considered that humans remain free and can refuse God’s love and its advantages. The refusal can be merely of the outer word of tradition in whose context religious conversion is received. In this case, the person would refuse what she considers to be an unsatisfactory notion of religion, but could retain the inner word of transformation. Lonergan described such a person as “what Rahner would call an ‘anonymous Christian,’ a person who is in the state of grace but doesn’t express himself the way people in the state of grace usually do.” However, the rejection can also be of the inner word of grace. In this case, the person refuses to return or continue in God’s love and stops, for at least that moment, God’s initiative toward her. Such a person’s life becomes characterized by the surd of sin, that is, she is in a state of mortal sin.

Even if religious conversion is not refused, the recipient of religious conversion will live in a dialectic of authenticity and unauthenticity. Lonergan distinguished his own view of being human from older, static views of human nature. In the older, metaphysically grounded idea of human nature, the performance or state of the human makes no difference with respect to that person’s human nature. One either is human, or is not human; the question is asked and answered in categories that are absolute and that pay no attention to one’s moral or

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intellectual performance or the state one is in. In Lonergan’s judgment, being human is something better understood in a concrete and dynamic way, a way that is grounded in experience and subject to the control of transcendental method, in which “being human is ambivalent: one can be human authentically, genuinely, and one can be human unauthentically.”¹²⁸ In actual performance, one’s humanity will then also be dialectical, for authenticity is “precarious,” always in danger of becoming unauthenticity instead.¹²⁹

For Lonergan, again, human authenticity is achieved in self-transcendence. The ultimate self-transcendence, and the only one that perseveres, is when our being becomes being-in-love (that is, when we receive religious conversion).¹³⁰ However, even when our being has become being-in-love, we are not completely free from the dialectical nature of our authenticity.¹³¹ A probability schedule has been enacted that makes it more probable for us to live authentically; but probability is not certainty, especially in any given situation, and the refusal of God’s love mentioned above remains a possibility for a converted subject.

Furthermore, the traditions that communicate the outer word of God’s grace to us can themselves become unauthentic over time.¹³² That is to say, the terms and meanings of the religion, over time, in practice become accommodated to the understanding and judgment of those who lack conversion. A person who has experienced religious conversion in relation to the outer word of such an unauthentic religious tradition will exist in a state of tension; staying true to the inner word of

¹³¹ See Lonergan, Method, 110-112, and 284.
¹³² Lonergan, Method, 80 and 162.
God’s gift of love will be incongruous with the outer word through which that inner word is understood. The performance of the religious tradition, and the people in it, is then likely to be dialectical. The genuine conversion of the individuals will exert pressure for reform on the tradition, while the inertia of the unauthentic tradition will exert pressure on the individuals to conform to its unauthentic standards. As Lonergan explained earlier, the initial work of grace is not sufficient. Religious conversion must be augmented by further operative and cooperative graces.

The Law of the Cross

What exactly makes this conversion supernatural or religious? That it can only be effected by God, directly, is probably sufficient to account for the supernatural nature and naming of this conversion. One could also argue that its gratuitous nature removes it from the economy of this world, thereby revealing its supernatural character.

However, religious conversion also motivates us to overcome evil with good.¹³³ That is not natural for human beings and goes beyond the expectation of natural ethics. But it is exactly the Law of the Cross. By the gift of God’s love, our hermeneutic frame has changed from being-unto-death to being-in-love that is a being-onto-eternal life. As Lonergan says,

Though grace bestows both good will and good performance, one still shrinks and draws back from the performance of denying oneself daily and taking up one’s cross and following Christ. For the fulfillment that is the love of God is not the fulfillment of any appetite or desire or wish or dream impulse, but the fulfillment of getting beyond one’s appetites and desires and wishes and impulses, the fulfillment of self-transcendence, the fulfillment of human authenticity, the fulfillment that overflows into love of one’s neighbor as oneself.¹³⁴

¹³³ See Lonergan, Method, 291.

¹³⁴ Bernard Lonergan, “Theology and Man’s Future,” in Lonergan, Second Collection, 147.
The words and deeds that we consider and do are different because our horizon is no longer death but the Beatific Vision (in faith) and the Life of the World to Come (in hope and love). God’s love lends power and effectiveness to our lives, allowing human development to become holiness.135

Lonergan quoted Rosemary Haughton’s observation that in his passion, Jesus “did not merely surrender to death; he gave himself away, body and mind and human heart, all one gift.”136 In his compassion and genuine concern for those who were persecuting him, Jesus exemplified the full and perfect fruit of religious conversion in his human consciousness. This de-centering of the human ego in self-transcending love brings “a radical peace, the peace that the world cannot give.”137 That which makes no sense according to the wisdom of this world makes perfect sense according to the wisdom infused by God.

Faith, Hope, and Love

When religious conversion informs a life lived on the basis of love, it relates to what Aquinas named the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). Acts of faith, hope and charity (which Aquinas understood as infused habits) are for Lonergan

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135 Lonergan, *Method*, 116. A tension will exist between religiously converted subjects and any outer word of tradition that does not teach overcoming evil with good. This will be true whether one is speaking of a non-Christian religion or philosophy or of Christianity insofar as it fails to measure up to its establishing and guiding norms. A distinctively Christian ethics, to the extent it is authentically Christian, would be fully coherent between the inner word of religious conversion and the outer word of ethical teaching. For, when authentic, Christian ethics coheres to (faithfully improvises upon, to use N.T. Wright’s terms) the example and teaching of Jesus, who came to seek and save the lost and laid down his life as a ransom for many. “The good,” as perceived and taught by religious or philosophical traditions that do not fully embrace such redemptive suffering (including unauthentically formulated Christian teachings) will be different. What is truly of value, however, does not change, for all lesser values are only rightly ordered with respect to transcendent value (and therefore both to the inner word of religious conversion and the outer word of the Word made flesh).


the result of religious conversion. Or, more precisely, they are the grace of religious conversion becoming cooperative.\textsuperscript{138}

As I said in the section on the horizon of faith, Lonergan’s description of faith corresponds to what Aquinas described as the light of faith, or infused wisdom. Lonergan describes assent to religious doctrines as “religious belief.”\textsuperscript{139} Religious belief is assent to the outer word of religious tradition motivated by reception of the inner word of God’s grace.\textsuperscript{140} This outer word is not a husk to be devalued relative to the kernel of the inner word. The interpersonal element of religious love can be manifested by God’s action toward us corporately, in sending religious messages though prophets and apostles, and, ultimately, by coming among us in person, incarnate.\textsuperscript{141} In that case, religious beliefs are not just objectifications of inner illumination but also the reception of an outer word that is genuinely God’s grace.

Concerning religious hope, Lonergan says in \textit{Method}, “It is not the promises of men but religious hope that can enable men to resist the vast pressures of social decay.”\textsuperscript{142} Hope and its opposite, despair, respond to the objective goodness of objects.\textsuperscript{143} Hope, as motivating force, is toward the attainment of a prospective goal.\textsuperscript{144} If it is not mere wishful thinking, hope may have some kind of ground, for example, the promise of someone judged faithful and powerful.

\textsuperscript{138} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 107.

\textsuperscript{139} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 118-119.

\textsuperscript{140} Beyond the multiplicity of the various religious formulations, then, Lonergan posits an underlying unity to all of the authentic ones. The multiplicity is not merely nominal, but in shared religious conversion Lonergan described a basis by which it might be possible for the multiplicity to be overcome. Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 119.

\textsuperscript{141} Lonergan, “Faith and Beliefs,” 47.

\textsuperscript{142} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 117.


\textsuperscript{144} Lonergan, “Horizons,” 25.
Lonergan does not specify in *Method* the specific kind of promises he has in mind, productive of religious hope and in contrast to the insufficient merely human promises. But in a later work he indicates that hope relates to God’s gift of love and God’s promises of resurrection and eternal life. Referring to John 3:16, the love in which our salvation is grounded, and Romans 8:22, the groaning expectation of the cosmos as it awaits the revelation of the children of God, Lonergan says that, “In that beckoning we discern not only the ground of our hope but also the cosmic dimension in the new creation of all things in Christ Jesus our Lord.”145 Lonergan also specifies that we hope in God’s grace, that God will help us overcome sin and despair; such hope has an active component of prayer.146

Christian hope, then, is the orientation to transcendent value becoming actual in our choices to live in a way that only makes sense in light of the resurrection. Such a way turns out to mean living in a way that is ever more attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible, for hope is our moral being as it becomes active.147 The pressure of decline is such that our correct functioning in this world requires cooperation with God’s grace. Even though it often seems pointless from within the horizon of this world, we must choose righteousness; the dynamic orientation to value becoming actual in motivating such choices is religious hope.

The love of God transforming our hearts as operative grace is religious conversion. When that love becomes cooperative in our lives as choices for self-sacrifice, that is religious charity. Lonergan says concerning it,

If passions are to quiet down, if wrongs are to be not exacerbated, not ignored, not merely palliated, but acknowledged and removed, then


possessiveness and human pride have to be replaced by religious charity, by the charity of the suffering servant, by self-sacrificing love.\textsuperscript{148} 

Religious charity exists when we evidence consistently the transformation of our feelings that grounds overcoming evil with good. It is coming to love in the supernatural way which Haughton spoke of above—the way of the Cross, the way that lives toward the resurrection.

Charles Hefling, in his article replying to Robert Doran’s efforts to construct a systematic theology based on Lonergan, has raised the question whether there exists in the horizon of transcendental method sufficient experiential ground to differentiate the habit of charity and sanctifying grace.\textsuperscript{149} In the context of Method, it is difficult to say to what extent Lonergan differentiates the two. Religious conversion and religious charity are the same grace, which is religious conversion insofar as it is operative and religious charity insofar as it is cooperative. And religious conversion is only notionally distinct from sanctifying grace. Also, Lonergan seems to use “charity” in some cases as the saving gift of God’s love, offered to all people.\textsuperscript{150} But that gift is religious conversion (operative grace).

One can make the case that religious conversion as operative grace (sanctifying grace) is the enacting in us of a dynamic state that makes us capable of being friends of God (adopted into God’s family, incorporated into the body of Christ, born from above) while religious charity is the actual (cooperative) state of friendship.

\textsuperscript{148} Lonergan, Method, 117.


\textsuperscript{150} Lonergan, “Philosophy of God,” 170. In this case, however, Lonergan may be accommodating his expression to the usage of Scripture (to which he was referring). As I noted in chapter one, one should expect of Lonergan the reasonable consistency of an intelligent person, but not an absolute consistency regarding terms.
between us and God as manifested in particular acts of love.\(^{151}\) However, Hefling has a serious point in arguing that the original distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity rested on metaphysical foundations that were dubious in its day and not necessitated by transcendental method.\(^{152}\) Also, as Hefling notes, Lonergan stated that the chief problem of understanding human being in terms of habits is that they are not given in consciousness.\(^{153}\) The habit of charity presumably would be included.

Insofar as the Thomist distinction between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity is preserved as the distinction between the operative initiation of salvation \textit{vis-à-vis} its cooperative maturation, it seems to me valid to preserve the distinction in the context of Lonergan’s later theology. As I explained while discussing religious experience, Lonergan makes a powerful experiential case for a divine initiative in salvation that actuates human freedom. However, insofar as the Thomist distinction is made the basis for really distinct relations or operations beyond that, I think Hefling’s point is well taken in noting the paucity of such distinctions in Lonergan’s later work and in asking for data from interiority to support them. I am not convinced that it is impossible to find such data, but I am also not sure what those data would be.

Taken corporately, religious charity, religious hope, and religious belief are recurrence schemes for the reversal of decline. Lonergan sums up the matter this way:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{151} & & \text{Robert Doran offers an explanation along these lines in his response to Hefling’s article. Doran believes he can ground this distinction in the terms of interiority. Robert Doran, “Addressing the Four-Point Hypothesis,” Theological Studies 68 (2007): 678-679.} \\
\text{152} & & \text{Hefling, “On the (Economic) Trinity,” 649-650 and 649n12. The critical point is that in medieval theology, sanctifying grace actuates a remote obediential potency.} \\
\end{align*}\]
Very briefly, the perpetuation of social evils by the strict justice (ad aequalitatem) of ‘an eye for an eye’ is broken by Christian charity. The determinisms of the technology, the economy, the polity, the sociocultural heritage can be withstood by Christian hope. The ineffectualness of truth in the midst of passionately competing ideologies is remedied by the power of faith.\footnote{Lonergan, “Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,” 309.}

In authentic religious belief, hope and charity, we cooperate with God in overcoming the spirit of our age and reshaping it on the basis of the orientation to transcendent value given us in religious conversion.

Concluding Observations

As possibly relevant concluding observations on religious conversion, let me make two points. They both anticipate my analyses of chapter seven and eight. However, I think they should be offered in kernel here to promote understanding.

First, our appropriation of this love is in some way dramatic and aesthetic. It is dramatic in that we are given a sense of a life that we are called to, and a judgment of our lives according to a new standard. It is also dramatic in that it transforms the dramatic pattern of experience, and has a powerful influence on how we perceive and use symbols. This appropriation of love is also aesthetic. It is the response of our whole persons to the beautiful and the good, more primary to human consciousness than the theoretical categories of reflection. It operates in the world of immediacy, and the feelings that flow from that world give transformed momentum and motivation to our reasoning and theoretical operations.

Second, the reception of God’s love places the operation of human consciousness in a new context. However we experience the world from now on, one thing we have also experienced is God’s love. However we try to understand the
world from now on, we understand also that God’s love is a reality we must take into account. When we commit ourselves to one of these possible understandings, we are also drawn to remember that we have committed ourselves to God’s love. When we take these judgments about reality as the basis for moral choices, we are drawn once again to this new source of value that has trans-valued all others. In the whole process, the feelings we experience and the consolation we receive help to make sense of a world we otherwise could not live well in. Because the operations of our consciousness take place in dialectic with this gift of divinely given subjectivity, they take on an aspect of prayer.

**Moral Conversion**

If the center of religious conversion is the love of God, the center of moral conversion is the transcendental notion of value. In religious conversion, we are changed to be in love with God in an unrestricted way. In moral conversion, we choose to have an ultimate source of value that is different from ourselves and make a commitment to follow and choose what is truly of value.

According to Lonergan, “Moral conversion changes the criterion of one’s decisions and choices from satisfactions to values.”¹⁵⁵ When we deliberate, we ask the question of value.¹⁵⁶ What is worthwhile? But questions for deliberation can intend two different types of values.¹⁵⁷ The first type of question asks about self-regarding value; these questions seek what is advantageous for oneself and one’s group. The second type asks about moral value; these questions seek what is truly

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¹⁵⁶ Lonergan, *Method*, 34.

and not merely apparently good, the good as referred to transcendent value. When our questions tend to inquire about self-regarding value, the criterion of our choices and decisions is satisfactions; when our questions tend to inquire about moral value, the criterion of our choices and decisions is the transcendental notion of value.

With respect to the functioning of our conscious operations, value has a status analogous to that of being. When we ask questions for intellectual reflection (Is it really so?), and are successful in finding answers, we affirm or discover the truth. When we ask questions for moral reflection (Is it good?), and we are successful in finding answers, we affirm or discover what is really of value.158

Generally speaking, Lonergan’s understanding of truth was one of correspondence: we have achieved truth when there exists conformity between our judgment of fact and the fact.159 As Lonergan says in his fuller explanation of truth in *Insight*, “knowing is true by its relation to being, and truth is a relation of knowing to being.”160 When we know the truth, there is a kind of identity between our knowing and the intelligibility of what exists. Because being is that which is known by intelligent understanding and reasonable judgment, when we reach a true judgment we know being.161

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160 Lonergan, *Insight*, 575. As Lonergan indicates, both here and in the speech on “Horizons,” there is a difference between the definition of truth and the criterion of truth. The definition of truth is correspondence. The criterion of truth is reaching a virtual unconditioned. The virtually unconditioned has conditions, but those conditions have been fulfilled. For example, a judgment of fact has the condition of sufficient evidence to warrant the judgment. If the relevant questions concerning the judgment have been answered satisfactorily, its conditions have been fulfilled. See Lonergan, *Insight*, 304-340.

The objective nature of value results from the nature of the world as intelligible, the “intrinsic intelligibility of being.”\textsuperscript{162} As Lonergan says in \textit{Insight}, “Now it is in rational, moral, self-consciousness that the good as value comes to light, for the value is the good as the possible object of rational choice.”\textsuperscript{163} The universe of good proportionate to us “is a compound of objects of desire, intelligible orders, and values, because the good that man does intelligently and rationally is a manifold in the field of experience, ordered by intelligence, and rationally chosen.”\textsuperscript{164} The possibility of ethics results from the intelligible ordering of the good humans are called to do, the good we freely choose to do. In making a right ethical choice, one has judged correctly and adhered to the intrinsic intelligibility of being as expressed in a true good of order.\textsuperscript{165}

To appropriate that view of ethics within the horizon of \textit{Method}, then, one can say that making a responsible judgment of value is analogous to making a reasonable judgment of fact. Whereas in a reasonable judgment of fact one achieves self-transcendence with respect to being, in a responsible judgment of value one attains self-transcendence with respect to the good. The judgment of fact could intend a particular good, or it could intend the good of order, or it could ask the further question as to whether these goods are rightly ordered with respect to transcendent value.

\textsuperscript{162} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 576. See also \textit{Insight}, 619-621. See below under intellectual conversion for the nature of objectivity in the world mediated by meaning.

\textsuperscript{163} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 624.

\textsuperscript{164} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 626.

\textsuperscript{165} Cf. the way Josef Pieper explains that prudence (rightly knowing the concrete world) must be the basis of justice (rightly acting in that world). Josef Pieper, \textit{The Four Cardinal Virtues}, tr. by R. Winston, \textit{et al.} (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 3-22.
However, just as questions for intelligence can be truncated or neglected by failing to practice the transcendental precepts, so also can moral questions. When our questions for deliberation are limited to what is of advantage to us or our group, we have illicitly limited the functioning of our conscious operations. We have chosen the limited particular good (mere satisfactions) over what is truly of value, and have thereby failed to attain moral self-transcendence.

Living ethically, then, means making decisions that are coherent with our responsible judgments of value. Judgments of value, to be responsible, must be based on the free operation of the human urge to self-transcendence, aided by well-educated feelings (I will discuss feelings more in chapter seven). Therefore the criterion of our choices and decisions must be what is really of value and not what is only of advantage to us. Deciding to act based on the improperly limited criterion of our own satisfaction alienates us from the concrete goodness of the world. It is absurd, as if we were judging an objective falsity to be true.

As I discussed under sin, unfortunately, we all too often incorporate absurdity into our lives. In order better to understand this set of breakdowns, and the way moral conversion can remedy them, I would like to recall the set of conscious operations (discussed in chapter two) that take place in the fourth phase of intentional consciousness. In this moral phase of conscious operations: 1) we undertake moral reflection by asking questions for deliberation, 2) we deliberate, considering which concrete course of action to choose, 3) we experience affective insight, the illumination of value through feelings, 4) we make a judgment of value concerning the courses of action, illuminated by the affective insight, and 5) we decide on a course of action, based on the judgment of value we have made. Preliminary to this phase, we have made a judgment of fact, an affirmation or denial of what is true or
false that serves as the basis for moral reflection. Please recall that none of these operations automatically follow from the prior conscious operations.

In moral conversion, we choose real values over mere satisfactions. That is, we do not illegitimately limit the operations of our consciousness concerning what is unpleasant or disadvantageous to us. Thereby, 1) we are willing to ask the full range of questions for deliberation, not avoiding those that might lead to self-sacrifice, 2) when we move to deliberating the courses of action prompted by our moral reflection, we are willing to consider the whole range of possible courses of action, not avoiding those that involve self-sacrifice, 3) the transcendental notion of value has become more dear to us than our self-interest, thereby the set of feelings that affects us will be more likely to reflect a valid response to real value, 4) we are willing to make judgments of value that are coherent with steps 1, 2 and 3, not avoid those judgments that lead to self-sacrifice, and 5) we are willing to decide on courses of action that are coherent with our judgments of value, even if those actions involve self-sacrifice.

The scope of moral conversion is not limited to the fourth phase of intentional consciousness, however. As I stated while discussing religious conversion, the whole range of our conscious operations has a moral component. The desire to avoid self-sacrificing actions can have an improper (remote) effect on all our conscious operations. How easy it is, for example, simply to look away from situations of need instead of being attentive to them. How easy it is to ignore inconvenient evidence that might lead toward our responsibility in or culpability for harm. Moral conversion, like religious and intellectual conversion, is a sea change in the operation of the human spirit.166 It is a radical shift away from the self-regarding, limited, flight from

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166 As Lonergan says in *Method*, 131, Conversion, as lived, affects all of man’s conscious and intentional operations. It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the
meaning and value to a self-transcending, open engagement with the world. It is a free choice of end, as I will explain in the chapter on feelings.

Conscience, in the sense in which Lonergan uses it, is the moral response of a person who has made a decision in accordance with the judgment of value on which the decision is based. It is a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, a feeling (intentional response to value). Conscience is based on the operation of intelligence, the way that we assess our own functioning as judges of value and deciders. In achieving moral, or real, self-transcendence, Lonergan states that our consciousness has become conscience. That is, the operations of consciousness that occur in the fourth phase of intentional consciousness (and implicitly, therefore, the operations in the prior phases) become characterized by an orientation to the transcendental notion of value, and we experience a concomitant satisfaction in the integrity that results.

Moral conversion is the basis for moving into a horizon characterized by moral self-transcendence. As Walter Conn cogently remarks,

A crucial factor in this long process of self-creating personal development, clearly, is the transformation of horizon, the shift in criterion of choice named moral conversion. Of course, one does not need to be morally converted to realize self-transcendence in particular choices. Still, moral conversion is a special instance of moral or real self-transcendence in the sense that moral conversion provides the programmatic base for the conscious deliberate development of the sustained moral self-transcendence of human authenticity.

In any one particular moral choice, we may choose rightly, whether or not we have been morally converted. On the whole, however, unless we have changed the criterion of our choices from self-regarding values to moral values, we will not


168 Lonergan, Method, 268-269.

169 Conn, Christian Conversion, 113.
consistently make moral choices. Moral conversion is the possibility of a horizon characterized by moral self-transcendence. Through moral conversion, it is possible for our responsible moral choices to be not sporadic but regular.

Moral conversion, therefore, is understandable in terms of emergent probability. As I stated in discussing sin, in any particular case it is possible for us not to sin. However, without what Aquinas referred to as formed habits of righteousness shaping the spontaneous tendencies of our conscious operations, we must deliberate each particular choice in order to choose responsibly. We quickly reach the limit human finitude imposes on our ability to deliberate, however, and we also are not likely either to deliberate well or to follow the results of our deliberation well without something analogous to those formed habits of righteousness. Once we have made self-regarding choices, a psychological continuity is established in our conscious operations that makes it more probable for us to make self-regarding choices in the future.

Moral conversion establishes the horizon in which the skills analogous to habits of righteousness (the cardinal virtues) are more likely to develop. By committing to the transcendental notion of value above our own satisfactions, we enact probability schedules in which we are more likely to be prudent, just, temperate and brave. A psychological continuity is established in this way, as well; the operation of the skills we develop is shaped by our orientation (as seen in the chart from Method on the human good). Moral conversion is the orientation toward transcendent value that makes it more probable that our conscious operations will reflect the skills of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. Moral conversion makes it more probable that the particular goods we choose and the good of order to which we contribute will be rightly ordered to transcendent value.
Because it is a remote (improper) criterion for the right functioning of the operations in the first three phases of conscious intentionality, moral conversion also makes it more probable that these conscious operations will follow the transcendental precepts (the moral imperatives: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible). It thereby transforms our entire conscious operation, whether in speaking of the institutions we are part of, the roles we have in those institutions, the way in which we cooperate with other people to serve particular goods, or which human needs we judge most of value. Moral conversion makes it more probable that we will follow the transcendental precepts. Because it affects probability schedules, it does not guarantee that we will operate correctly in any particular instance. However, it is the orientation that governs the way we are more probable to form and actuate skills. We more probably become attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in each respective operation.

Based on this enacted probability schedule, the operation of every entry in Method’s chart on the human good is more likely to reflect an orientation to transcendent value. The entire enactment of the human good is therefore transformed. Without the orientation provided by moral conversion, the entries in the chart (which indicate human relations) are likely to be characterized by absurdity, alienation, unauthenticity, decline and bias. Individual moments in the history of the human good may be marked by progress, but as a whole the probabilities will catch up with us and the good of order will become dominated by sin. Given the presence of moral conversion, each of the operations becomes more likely to be characterized by intelligibility, self-transcendence, authenticity, and progress. A good of order oriented to transcendent value, to righteousness, becomes more probable.170

Lonergan especially notes the ability of moral conversion to counteract individual, group and general bias.\textsuperscript{171} Although Lonergan does not specify exactly how moral conversion combats these three biases, I think a relevant explanation can be deduced from his writings. Individual bias indicates that self-regarding assessments of value have become the proximate or remote condition for our conscious operations; therefore, the operation of our conscious intentionality is restricted according to what is of advantage to us.\textsuperscript{172} Moral conversion exactly opposes this dynamic of decline because choices in accord with moral conversion do not limit one’s conscious operations in that way but to openly pursue moral value. Group bias has the same structure as individual bias, only the level of operation is with respect to the views and interests of one’s group. Moral conversion exactly opposes this bias, as well, in that the transcendental notion of value replaces the restricted nature of the group’s wisdom and interest. Finding an intelligible way to go beyond the wisdom of one’s group, however, is not likely to be accomplished by a commonsense approach; our common sense comes from our groups and is restricted by the insights possessed by the group. A theoretical way of operating (pattern of experience), however, seeks knowledge of things in themselves, and not with respect to us. It can give answers that are not as restricted by the commonsense insights particular to our groups. Therefore, moral conversion shows the error of the

\textsuperscript{171} Lonergan, Method, 270, specifies that the biases that moral conversion opposes are individual, group, and general. In Method, 240, Lonergan specifies that moral conversion by itself is not enough but that the individual must still counteract individual, group and general bias. In Method, 242, Lonergan specifies that moral conversion arms one against bias, but does not specify which biases. Dramatic bias is absent from these lists, despite Lonergan’s earlier mention of “the bias of unconscious motivation brought to light by depth psychology,” there refers to the pages in Insight discussing dramatic bias. Lonergan, Method, 231 and 231n107. See my discussion of dramatic bias (in the section on sin) for the way I believe Lonergan brings into the horizon of Method what he earlier referred to as dramatic bias. See also chapter eight, in which I will discuss the healing of the bias of unconscious motivation.

\textsuperscript{172} See Gregson, Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions, 55-56, for the restrictive nature of bias.
imperialism of common sense, in which people of common sense consider that only their immediately practical way of approaching the world is relevant to understanding the world and solving its problems. But the imperialism of common sense is general bias.\(^{173}\)

**Intellectual Conversion**

If the love of God is the center of religious conversion, and the transcendental notion of value the center of moral conversion, the transcendental notion of being is at the center of intellectual conversion. Intellectual conversion is the removal of a besetting mistake concerning the human relation to truth.\(^{174}\) Intellectual conversion therefore sets the proper parameters in which humans know reality, replacing an erroneous understanding of knowledge and objectivity with the foundations for the development of critical realism. While my main focus is on the relationship between religious and moral conversion, I think that discussing intellectual conversion is important to explain the full picture of what Lonergan intends by the other two conversions and the notion of conversion.\(^{175}\)

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\(^{173}\) In analyzing moral conversion, Walter Conn differentiates critical and uncritical moral conversions. Uncritical moral conversion is the simple shift in any person from seeking satisfactions to seeking values. Critical moral conversion requires the concomitant presence in the person of intellectual conversion, either explicitly or, more likely, implicitly. In critical moral conversion, one is more likely to overcome the conventional morality regulated by one’s group because one has realized oneself as an originating source of value. While Lonergan does not differentiate moral conversion into critical and uncritical phases, Conn seems to offer a valid explanation of how moral conversion can overcome general bias. The authority (meaning not just the ability but the right) to go beyond the practical wisdom of one’s group seems, implicitly, to demand that somehow one knows oneself to be a knower and has some kind of notion of what that means. While the proximate requirement of overcoming general bias would remain moral conversion, (at least implicit) intellectual conversion would constitute a remote condition. Conn, *Christian Conversion*, 127-129.


\(^{175}\) For example, correctly understanding that moral conversion prompts one to discover objective moral values depends on one’s understanding of objectivity. But intellectual conversion exactly obtains a correct view of human objectivity.
Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2006 address at the University of Regensburg, stated that, “The courage to engage the whole breadth of reason, and not the denial of its grandeur—this is the programme with which a theology grounded in Biblical faith enters into the debates of our time.”\textsuperscript{176} A question of importance for Lonergan in this respect, and one that is pivotal for the present study, involves objectivity. Pope Benedict rightly notes the question of objectivity as a key issue in the downward spiral that has segregated questions of the world’s intelligibility from questions of its exploitability. Questions that are decidable by mathematical or empirical inquiry are allowed as objective, and the proper objects of scientific knowledge. All other questions, questions of human dignity and destiny, of ethics, and not least the question of God, descend to the second-class status of un-scientific subjectivity.

Lonergan argues that this reductionism results from a false understanding of the criteria of objectivity because positivism assumes that the nature of the objects in question will dictate whether the human subject can have certain access to them.\textsuperscript{177} Objects of study that are quantifiable or subject to empirical experiment can be studied objectively. All others cannot. In place of this Kantian/Cartesian dualism Lonergan offers a view of objectivity based on the self-transcendence of the authentic subject.

There is a world, or an aspect of the world, that in Lonergan’s estimation does approach the positivist’s expectation of objectivity. In the world of immediacy that I described under the horizon of faith, the data of sense and the data of consciousness are present to the one experiencing them in an immediate way. According to the


\textsuperscript{177} Lonergan, Method, 262-265.
positivist, the more directly present something is for the experiencing the more overall objectivity obtains. For example, an object seen in clear daylight is more present to the observer than the same object seen at twilight; the daylight experience (all other things being equal) is more objective, because the additional light makes the object more present to sight. Objectivity in this world means the correct function of biological extroversion.\textsuperscript{178}

However, as I also explained, this “world of immediacy” is only a small fragment of the real world that adult human beings live in. In the world “mediated by meaning” we know the world not simply by experiencing but also by understanding, judging, and deciding. For example, in the world of immediacy, water is simply wet. But in the world mediated by meaning I can know water as H\textsubscript{2}O. By analyzing water and reflectively assigning it a place in relation to other chemical compounds, I have not imposed a meaning on water but have understood and judged the intelligibility inherent in it. Similarly, social institutions such as family and marriage are not mere impositions on an underlying individual reality, nor are they mere sets of secondary qualities that we coordinate with the metaphysically prior primary qualities. These institutions rather reflect an insight into the intersubjective basis of meaning, the way that our common reality forms the basis from which our individuality grows. To restrict objectivity to the world of immediacy and relegate to second-class status the valid insights that form the world mediated by meaning is a vast reductionism.

In place of this reductionism, Lonergan calls for the development of a confident humility in human knowing and the requirement of authenticity. A key moment in this process, according to Lonergan, is intellectual conversion. Intellectual conversion is the setting right of the human relation to truth. Specifically, it is the

\textsuperscript{178} Lonergan, Method, 262-265.
eradication of a myth concerning human knowing. The myth is that knowing in the
world mediated by meaning happens in the same way that it does in the world of
immediacy. In the world of immediacy, the presence of the data to the subject is the
guarantor. In the world mediated by meaning, however, the subject must investigate
and make choices. She must follow a process of questioning and reasoning,
experiencing and verifying. The data of immediacy remain present to one, but
knowledge becomes ethical and existential, a matter of understanding and judgment,
and not only a question of access to data.

Objectivity in this world means letting the stages of the process of knowing
operate according to their intrinsically regulating norms. Experiencing must be
attentive, truly open to and seeking out data. Understanding must be intelligent,
regulated only by the desire to know. Judging what is the case must follow the same
precept, with the addition that the subject must commit himself neither to stopping the
process of inquiry prematurely nor to refusing assent when all the relevant questions
have been assessed.179

The knower who has realized this process within herself, who has taken
responsibility for it and for what it means, has, in Lonergan’s terms, experienced
intellectual conversion. She has entered a mature relation to herself and to knowing
the truth about reality. By following wonder, she has transcended the limits of
biological extroversion (which still, always, remains present to her). She has realized
that, in the world mediated by meaning, objectivity is authentic subjectivity.180

While intellectual conversion can seem an abstract process, something
important for philosophers but not for other people, Walter Conn illustrates its wide-

179 Lonergan, Method, 262-265.
180 Lonergan, Method, 265 and 292..
ranging importance with the story of Vic Braden.\textsuperscript{181} Braden came from a working-class family and grew up believing his life choices were limited to an industrial job (like his father’s) or a job on the railroad. However, he received the opportunity to attend Kalamazoo College on an athletic scholarship. While there, he was amazed to discover that the ability to learn was not necessarily tied to socio-economic status. He, a poor factory-worker’s son, could learn. As Conn relates,

The moment of this insight remains clear to Braden because he vividly recalls standing in the middle of a Monroe street a few days later, screaming at his younger brother Paul who had dropped out of school: ‘We’re not dumb, Paul! I’ve learned. We’re not dumb! We’re not dumb!’ Paul went on to an eventual graduate degree, and Vic, rooted in the discovery of his own mind—a discovery that still enchants him—created a new life for himself.\textsuperscript{182}

As Conn explains, the point of this story is not that Braden (who went on to become a televised tennis instructor) gained some new capacity to learn while at Kalamazoo College. Rather, he “discovered and took possession of the intelligence that was always his.”\textsuperscript{183} By appropriating his own mind, Braden became creative in a way new for him, a way that recognized his ability to know reality. By making the fundamental discovery of himself as a knower, he became more rightly ordered to the transcendental notion of being.

In Lonergan’s opinion, intellectual conversion is essentially simple, something that occurs spontaneously when someone “reaches the age of reason, implicitly drops the earlier criteria of reality (are you awake? do you see it? is it heavy? and so forth) and proceeds to operate on the criteria of sufficient evidence or sufficient reason.”\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{181} Conn, \textit{Christian Conversion}, 121-122. Conn refers to intellectual conversion as cognitive conversion.

\textsuperscript{182} Conn, \textit{Christian Conversion}, 122.

\textsuperscript{183} Conn, \textit{Christian Conversion}, 122.

Spontaneous conversions, however are not secure. Modern philosophical training can especially complicate matters. A great many modern philosophers (Kant, for instance) seem to take it for granted that the easy and obvious criterion of immediacy is the only one that applies in human knowledge. Sufficient evidence or sufficient reason, on the other hand, ends up requiring a fairly sophisticated philosophical discussion in which one realizes that what one needs for reasonable judgment is not immediate contact but a virtually unconditioned. The eight hundred pages of the book *Insight* were needed, in large part, because of how endemic the lack of intellectual conversion has become in philosophical and many theological circles and because of how deeply rooted is the myth intellectual conversion combats.

Intellectual conversion, however difficult, is necessary for a person to function fully as an adult. While the universal need for religious and moral conversion may seem more obvious, without the right orientation to intelligibility and truth provided by intellectual conversion, people will remain immature and unsettled in the use of their minds. Lonergan argues,

> Intellectual self-transcendence is taking possession of one’s own mind. It is a matter of attending to each of its many operations, of identifying them, of comparing them, of distinguishing them, naming them, relating them to one another, grasping the dynamic structure of their emergence and development, and so coming to clarify the workings of the mind in mathematics, in science, in common sense, in history, in philosophy.

The absence of intellectual conversion confuses philosophical issues and prevents our coming to know ourselves as knowers. However, its presence makes possible the

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185 As Aristotle explains in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, there are no accidental virtues. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 5.8.


control of meaning by transcendental method of studies in history, science, philosophy, theology, mathematics, practical wisdom and common sense.

One can use emergent probability to understand intellectual conversion. Given the absence of intellectual conversion, while much progress can be made in the sciences, history, philosophy, common sense, etc., the progress will probably contain an admixture of an objective falsity. Therefore, although the elements that promote progress may be genuine, the whole system in which human understanding takes place will more and more probably become characterized by absurdity and decline. However, in the presence of intellectual conversion, the emergence of critical realism becomes more probable, as well as the realization that adequate control over meaning will only be attained through transcendental method. In this scenario, intellectual conversion changes the probability schedule under which critical realism and transcendental method will probably develop; these developments, in turn, make progress in human intellectual pursuits more probable because more adequate understanding and control of the process of human understanding has been attained.

Conclusion

The destructive nature of sin can only be overcome in our lives through conversion. Lonergan’s notion of conversion draws on his earlier theology that explains the work of God’s grace in turning us to God. In the horizon of Method, conversion is the about-face, the vertical exercise of liberty, that occasions a new horizon and orients us in that horizon toward self-transcendence. Specifically, religious conversion is the transforming gift of God’s love, the religious experience and that makes possible the horizon of faith. In moral conversion, we choose to live for what is truly of value, not for our own satisfactions. In intellectual conversion, we
appropriate what it means that we are knowers who live in both the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning.

Having explained religious, moral and intellectual conversion, I can now proceed to finish answering my main question, “What is the relation between religious and moral conversions?” As I will explain in chapter eight, religious conversion sublates moral and intellectual conversions. Religious conversion also provides the *de facto* necessary basis for moral and intellectual conversion, thereby bringing the possibility for a healed and unified consciousness. The relationship between religious and moral conversions is transacted through changes in motivation involving feelings (explained in chapter seven).
In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle reflected on the nature of pleasure and its relation to the supreme good:

Again, the fact that pleasure is pursued by all animals and human beings is some indication that it is in some sense the supreme good:

No saying altogether comes to naught
That many voice
[It is itself a god.]
But since the natural and best state neither is, nor is thought to be, the same for all, they do not all pursue the same pleasure, although it is pleasure that they all pursue. In fact they probably do all pursue the same pleasure, and not that which they think, and would assert, that they pursue; because everything contains by nature something divine.¹

We therefore pursue, naturally, what is godlike; in all our seeking, we somehow run after the divine. And our right relation to the divine is one of pleasure. One is reminded of the catechetical teaching that our chief end is to know God and enjoy God forever.

In Lonergan, the relation between religious and moral conversion is a transformation—a healing and elevation—of our feelings. By receiving an apprehension of transcendent value, we are directed toward a supernatural end and our other values are reconfigured. As Lonergan explains in *Method in Theology*, this reconfiguration is accomplished in us through our feelings. Our motivation is changed because our feelings draw us toward true value.

*Method* does not, however, specify entirely what feelings are and how our feelings make such a change in us. To help understand Lonergan’s account of

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¹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. by J. Thomson, rev. by H. Tredennick, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 7.13, 195-196, emphasis original; I have completed Aristotle’s quotation from Hesiod, which would have been familiar to his original audience, adding the third line as supplied by 196n1.
feelings in *Method*, I will draw on the writings of Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand. In these two authors, one finds a rich relation of feeling and value, which Lonergan draws on. Lonergan transposes their insights to the horizon of transcendental method, explaining what it means that for incarnate subjects, feelings are intentional responses to value.

Feelings

Lonergan appropriates much of his thought on feelings from Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand. Scheler’s works were largely untranslated into English and out of print in German during the relevant periods of Lonergan’s life. Lonergan drew on Scheler’s philosophy through two mediators: von Hildebrand, who in addition to his own important contribution was an interpreter of Scheler, and Manfred Frings, who wrote an introduction to Scheler’s thought.

As indicated in the previous chapters, feelings are extremely significant in Lonergan’s later theology. However, Lonergan does not go to great lengths to specify exactly what these feelings are and how they work. Scheler and von Hildebrand, to whom Lonergan refers in this respect, offer much more complete explanations. I therefore think it appropriate to examine each of them carefully, looking closely at the works to which Lonergan refers, for what I am seeking in this work is the relation between the conversions Lonergan has thematized. Those connections and relations are often explained as feelings, and examining Scheler and von Hildebrand allows me

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to offer a possibly relevant explanation for what Lonergan means and what relations he indicates when using this term. I will first introduce the relevant portions of Scheler, as interpreted by Frings, then move on to von Hildebrand’s distinctive contribution, and finally examine Lonergan’s explanation of feelings in light of Scheler and von Hildebrand’s works.5

Max Scheler

Scheler’s philosophical anthropology explains the powerful role of feelings and values as motivating factors that order the human person. His philosophy explores our human existence in our innerliness (Innesein), a state of having ourselves, of being to ourselves, that contrasts with the non-psychological nature of inanimate objects.6 At the most basic level, this innerliness manifests itself as an “urge-forward (Drang)” and a movement upward (“vapor (Dampf)”).7 All of life to some extent evidences this motion outward from and through organic vital centers, in which living beings differentiate and move in a way appropriate to each type of being.8

This could remind one here of the “will to life” described by Schopenhauer, but the comparison is minimal. Scheler’s “urge-forward” and “vapor” do not share the dark origin of Schopenhauer’s will, but rather are the beginnings of erōs in which

5 In that Lonergan used Frings to appropriate Scheler, I will do the same here. For further on Scheler’s philosophy, besides his fifteen-volume collected works, one may consult Michael Gabel, Intentionalität des Geistes: Der phänomenologische Denkansatz bei Max Scheler (Leipzig: St Benno, 1991), or John Nota, Max Scheler: Der Mensch und seine Philosophie (Fridingen an der Donau, Germany: Börsig, 1995).
6 Frings, Scheler, 31.
7 Frings, Scheler, 31.
8 Frings, Scheler, 33.
organic life instinctually begins to overcome the limits of its environment. In this primal love, we see the beginnings of self-transcendence.

Scheler rejected attempts to reduce human existence to a mere extension of the biological world, however, for humans are elevated above the animals by spirit (Geist). “Spirit is the elevation to world-openness and the world’s presence. It is objectification. Spirit elevates man above world and above himself (as organic being).” By “objectification (Sachlichkeit),” Scheler means three things: 1) Spirit is determined by “the content (Gehalt) of a thing,” as opposed to being dominated by “instincts, drives or organic states;” 2) Spirit is directed toward the world in the form of a love without desire (begierdefrei); and 3) Spirit’s basic determination is “the capacity to differentiate essence (Was-sein) from existence (Dasein).” The “essence” spirit differentiates is essence as intended by Husserl, not Aquinas, a phenomenologically immediate engagement. By differentiating essence, spirit transcends biological and environmental limitations by gaining insight into the existence that is revealed.

Spirit, therefore, is the human capacity to have a world, not merely be in a world. But it is more:

As we shall see later, the center of spirit is that which Scheler calls person, an ontic sphere, which in terms of individualizing acts constitutes each individual spirit (as a person), and which in terms of social acts, constitutes the ontic relation to the “other” in different

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10 Frings, Scheler, 38.

11 Frings, Scheler, 38.

12 Frings, Scheler, 38-39. Scheler knew Heidegger personally; however, due to Scheler’s premature death in 1927, it is difficult to say to what extent his and Heidegger’s understandings interpenetrate, and to what extent there is influence of one on the other. See Friggs, 22-26.

13 Frings, Scheler, 13-14.
strata and forms of sociation, as mass, communities of life, society, etc., which all have their foundation in an absolute spiritual center as absolute person.\textsuperscript{14}

Individually and socially, then, we are directed toward a world in love, a world which we experience in its inherent thisness or thatness, not merely as extensions or projections of our instincts or drives. We are constituted as that which can immediately engage a world, not merely be part of it. This world engagement can be meaningful, for our experiences can provoke wonder, questioning.\textsuperscript{15} As persons, we become active in a world as those who can be self-transcendent.

What carries us beyond animal being, then, is that we have love, values and insight.\textsuperscript{16} In terms of our constitution as person, as spiritual beings, Scheler argued that emotion has a place parallel to reason and not reducible to it.\textsuperscript{17} Such emotional acts are “pure intuition (\textit{Anschauung}), feeling, pure loving, hating, pure striving and willing.”\textsuperscript{18} Emotion is not anti-logical; but emotion functions in autonomous acts that are analogous to the logical acts of reason but not controlled by or based on those logical acts.

In this regard, Scheler refers to Pascal’s reasons of the heart, stating that emotional experience constitutes an order of the heart that is distinct from the laws of rational order.\textsuperscript{19} While Scheler does not devalue logic or rationality, he believed that the emotional order reveals the world in a way rationality cannot:

\textsuperscript{14} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 38, emphasis original.
\textsuperscript{15} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 39.
\textsuperscript{16} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 48.
\textsuperscript{17} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{18} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 50.
\textsuperscript{19} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 50.
Emotional experience, whose foundation is this “ordre de coeur,” is not intellectually understandable as laws of logic are. The intellect is as blind to it as is the ear to colors (FORM 269). But this mode of experience makes to us accessible an immutable order of its genuine respective objects: values and their interconnections, and the aprioricity of the emotional consists in such intentional objects.\(^\text{20}\)

Scheler thus describes our emotional capacity to know the world that is analogous to our rational ability to know it, but that produces different results from rationality because it is attuned to know the world in a different way.

With respect to emotional experience, Scheler differentiates feelings and feeling-states.\(^\text{21}\) Feeling-states (Gefühl) indicate persistent, underlying, emotional experience such as states of illness, health, pain, and weakness; these feeling-states break out into our conscious intentionality through feelings (das Fühlen).\(^\text{22}\) Feelings (das Fühlen) have intentional direction (they are part of our knowing the world), and when they satisfy this intentional direction by entering our conscious intentionality there is a corresponding emotional satisfaction.\(^\text{23}\)

Scheler differentiates a hierarchy of feeling states: physical (pain, being tickled, itching), body or vital (weakness, anxiety, health), psychic (sorrow, joy), and spiritual (blissfulness, despair, pangs of conscience, peace of heart).\(^\text{24}\) Of these, spiritual feeling states are the deepest and most fundamental to us. They “pour forth directly from the core of the person … and shine through the person and his life.”\(^\text{25}\) They are absolute (one is not despairing about something, but is simply despairing)

\(^{20}\) Frings, Scheler, 50.

\(^{21}\) Frings, Scheler, 50-51.

\(^{22}\) Frings, Scheler, 51-52.

\(^{23}\) Frings, Scheler, 52.

\(^{24}\) Frings, Scheler, 53. The examples are not exhaustive.

\(^{25}\) Frings, Scheler, 55.
and independent of our willful intentions.\textsuperscript{26} While physical, vital, and psychic feeling states can affect us mightily, spiritual feeling-states ground and orient our world.

Feelings unite us to each other and with the world. Being a person implies participating in essential relation to “the other.”\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Being with} the other is ontic, for as persons we are both individual and social beings. Fundamentally, “I” and “thou” exist in the emotional sphere; and “thou” or “we” is more basic for us than “I.”\textsuperscript{28} Emotionally, we share community of feeling or fellow feeling, are influenced by the emotional states of others, and experience emotional identification.\textsuperscript{29} In human sympathy, we therefore experience emotional insight into the reality of who we are.

Feeling-states are “tokens for values and disvalues.”\textsuperscript{30} To experience value is to prefer or reject, either absolutely or relatively. The seat of value is in acts of feeling—preferring or rejecting—and finally in love and hatred.\textsuperscript{31} Emotional cognition, in which values are intuited, is not the same as sensory perception and thinking, and it is the only access to the realm of values.\textsuperscript{32}

This is not to say that we are incapable of realizing the worth or worthlessness of something intellectually. However, the apprehension of value through feeling is of vital importance to the moral functioning in which we make those rational decisions of worth. Frings explains,

\textsuperscript{26} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 55.

\textsuperscript{27} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 57.

\textsuperscript{28} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 57.

\textsuperscript{29} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 56-66.

\textsuperscript{30} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 54.

\textsuperscript{31} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 67.

\textsuperscript{32} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 67.
It is in such acts of preferring, rejecting, loving, hating, as intentional functions, where values become apparent, i.e., during the pursuance of emotional acts the a priori value-content is given. This value evidence, as such, is absolutely independent of judgments or propositions about them. All ethics has to go back to facts of moral cognition and its a priori conditions.33

The emotional world has its own content that can only be displayed in ethics, not reduced to logic. In this relation of feeling to ethics, moral cognition and ethics are not reducible to feeling. The judgments and propositions are still required, and feeling does not automatically produce them. But feeling does order one within a world.

As I noted previously, feeling should not be taken to be a purely individual phenomenon. Scheler distinguishes four types of interpersonal emotional phenomena: 1) community of feeling (Miteinanderfühlen); 2) fellow-feeling (Mitfühlen, Mitgefühl); 3) psychic contagion (psychische Anseckung); and 4) emotional identification (Einsfühlung).34 Of note is that Scheler did not consider these interpersonal feelings to be additions to or supplements to personal feelings; rather, to be a human person implies essential relation to “the other.”35 The interpersonal feelings are at least as foundational as the personal ones, for they flow from our essential intersubjectivity.

Scheler defines the four interpersonal feeling states as follows. First, community of feeling is a feeling-in-common shared by two or more people, in which each knows the other’s feelings toward an object or other not as an external thing but as something deeply shared.36 Second, fellow-feeling is strictly intentional toward the

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33 Frings, Scheler, 67.
34 Frings, Scheler, 56.
35 Frings, Scheler, 57.
36 Frings, Scheler, 59-60
feeling of the other, not toward the person or object of the other’s feeling. One is moved by the other’s feeling and shares it deeply, but one commiserates with it or reproduces it instead of spontaneously producing it (as in community of feeling). Third, psychic contagion “differs from fellow feeling because it lacks intentionality toward someone; it differs from community of feeling in that there is no active participation in someone else’s feelings.” One person’s feelings, or the feelings of a group, affect another person or group. It is not a question of what the feeling is directed toward, or of intentionally participating in another’s feelings, but rather there is a communication of feeling almost as an emotional infection. Finally, emotional identification is an extreme form of psychic contagion. This phenomenon can occur in two ways: “Either a man is feeling with the other to such an extent that his self dissolves into the other’s (heteropathic type), or that he takes the other’s ego wholly as his own (idiopathic type).” There is thus a loss of self, or of the differentiation of the self, to the person or feeling of the other.

Scheler describes the fundamental and most natural order of the world as ordered love (ordo amoris). “Man is, before he can think or will, ens amans.” Frings identifies this proposition as the core of Scheler’s philosophy. Love, an irreducible and spontaneous movement of unifying attraction, is the elemental

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37 Frings, Scheler, 60.
38 Frings, Scheler, 60-61.
39 Frings, Scheler, 62.
40 Frings, Scheler, 62.
41 See Frings, Scheler, 67-80.
42 Frings, Scheler, 67, emphasis original.
43 Frings, Scheler, 67-68.
Love, and its opposite, hatred, are not feelings but are the basis for the deepest feeling-states and primary to all feelings.

Love and hatred are the intentional comprehension of value. That is, love and hatred are the basis for value comprehension (preferring one value to another) with respect to objects. Love and hatred operate immediately as modes of response to objects. They are not the result of judgments about the objects; rather, the judgments about the objects take place after the response of love or hatred, and the response of love or hatred is autonomous with respect to reasoning (judgment).

Scheler believed in an absolute hierarchy of values. This is not to say that the values to be assigned to all things are eternal, for things can constantly change and their value in the world can be relative to a number of factors. However, Scheler described a hierarchy of values in which types of values are constant, and also a striving to be ethical that is also constant in the various times and societies. The absolute hierarchy of values corresponds to the hierarchy of feelings described already. When a person is ordered rightly, her spiritual feelings will direct her to the values of holiness (in which objects directly pertain to the absolute, such as in authentic religious acts), her psychic feelings will direct her to “spiritual” values (including the human apprehension of beauty and ugliness, of right and wrong, and of

44 Frings, Scheler, 68.
45 Intentional, here, is used in Husserl’s sense, not with the sense of doing something on purpose.
46 Frings, Scheler, 68.
47 Frings, Scheler, 68-69. Again, Scheler does not disvalue reasoning. However, especially in response to Kant’s dismissal of feeling as a valid source for practical reason, Scheler is eloquent in making his case for the place of emotional cognition.
48 Frings, Scheler, 103-132.
49 Frings, Scheler, 103-110.
truth), her vital feeling states will direct her toward true vital values (including nobility and vulgarity, health and disease, forthcoming aging and strength), and her bodily feelings will direct her toward sensible values (the bodily agreeable and disagreeable). More than that, this rightly ordered woman’s feelings intuitively will prefer the higher values to the lower (for example, preferring spiritual to vital values), and prefer the higher to the lower objects within each type of value.

The rightly ordered person expresses ordered love. Love is pure interest in the world. Love directs the spontaneous movement from lower to higher values, and the enhancement of the higher values is love’s creative force. Therefore, love opens our eyes to the higher values. The core of the ethics of any particular society or person will then be the order and direction of love and hatred that is actually embraced. A person’s or a society’s ethics are likely to be rightly ordered to the extent that the actual order of love and hatred within that person or society embraces the right valuation of the absolutely higher values.

The reasons of the heart rightly expressed in ordered love are analogous to logical reasoning. Just as one can form judgments through logical insight, one can love with emotional insight. However, the set of emotional insights that reflect one’s ordering are prior to the acts of logical insight. Frings explains,

The *ordo amoris*, then, is a constant disposition of attracting (love) and repelling (hatred) within man’s environment, whose value structure does not change throughout the factual, historical and social changes of environment in time. Whatever man sees, wills, does, and knows, has

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50 Frings, *Scheler*, 114-117. I am following Frings’ terminology, and it seems to me that he uses “spiritual” in two different ways.

51 Frings, *Scheler*, 111.

52 Frings, *Scheler*, 69.


54 Frings, *Scheler*, 72.
gone through this immutable structure of values, which he carries around with him like a house, and all he sees through its windows is only that which these windows permit him to see.\textsuperscript{55}

Acts of experiencing, willing, choosing, and knowing therefore presuppose emotional insight, and the emotional insight is an immediate contact with the world that affects the way the experiencing, willing, choosing and deciding are likely to take place. Scheler claims that “love is the mother of spirit and reason itself,” for love is the way we participate, immediately and spontaneously, in the world.\textsuperscript{56} In being rightly ordered by love, we are spontaneously open to experiencing the world, to being willing to follow the good, to choosing higher values over lower ones, and thereby to knowing the world rightly and living rightly in it. In love, we find the historical living-space (\textit{Spielraum}) within which we fulfill the potentiality of spirit and person.\textsuperscript{57}

Besides rightly ordered love there is also aberration. Some of these are particular aberrations, in which we accept a false hierarchy of values in some limited respect.\textsuperscript{58} We can also, however, experience a revolt of the heart in which we turn away from the hierarchy of values in a thoroughgoing way.

Scheler names this revolt of the heart “ressentiment,” a term he adapts from the usage of Friedrich Nietzsche.\textsuperscript{59} It is a deep and persistent violation of ordered love, a depersonalizing hatred, the weakness of a refusal to self-transcend.\textsuperscript{60} In

\textsuperscript{55} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 71.

\textsuperscript{56} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 71, emphasis original.

\textsuperscript{57} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 80.

\textsuperscript{58} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 75.


\textsuperscript{60} Frings, \textit{Scheler}, 90.
ressentiment, the absolute order of values is violated; hatred, contra love, spontaneously moves one from higher values toward lower, toward disvaluing higher values.

Ressentiment arises in persons who have been emotionally injured in some way. As the result of some kind of values clash, in which the order of values has been violated, the weaker person receives emotional trauma. Ressentiment is the repetition of the memory of that injury, a re-feeling, usually strengthened over time, of the emotional defense-reaction to having one’s value or values violated.

Ressentiment produces hostility, which can grow and mature into enviousness (Seelsucht) and malice (Hämischkeit). It can be received socially and well as personally, for one experiences a large degree of emotional continuity with one’s social group.

Ressentiment's significance lies in its ability to distort all of our functioning. Scheler refers to ressentiment as “psychic self-poisoning” in which our moral valuation becomes defective and thereby warps our moral judgments. When fully developed, it is an immediate and continuous emotional disposition that negatively affects our apprehension of values. In the end, in can turn into a state of “sublime revenge,” which hates the good and beautiful. The structure of our rules of preferring (by which we prefer the good, or the better to the worse) becomes

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61 Frings, Scheler, 82.
62 Frings, Scheler, 82.
63 Frings, Scheler, 82-83.
64 Frings, Scheler, 81, 93.
65 Frings, Scheler, 83.
66 Frings, Scheler, 90-91.
67 Frings, Scheler, 93.
inverted.68 Ressentiment limits self-transcendence, because the repetition of woundedness limits or forbids contact with, participation in, the things themselves.69 Because humans, ontologically, are the place where sensible values occur, the world-refusal of ressentiment is a warping of who we are.70

Somehow, in ressentiment we are always lying to ourselves. Scheler held that the absolute scale of values is luminous, that somehow we always know what true values are.71 Ressentiment results from a violation of absolute value in which a weaker party is injured in a value clash. Therefore, in ressentiment itself there is a witness that we secretly know the true value that ressentiment leads us to de-value. In this repeated and damaging lie, we thereby not only lose the world, but our true selves.

Dietrich von Hildebrand

Dietrich von Hildebrand, in his Christian Ethics, does much more than comment on Scheler. Von Hildebrand provides a powerful explanation of human ethical being that includes Scheler’s explanation of feeling while challenging aspects of it. While von Hildebrand does accord great importance to feeling, he shows how feeling is related to the more fundamental category of moral choice.

Von Hildebrand begins his ethics with a consideration of Aristotle’s heuristic definition that the good is what all things desire.72 Von Hildebrand finds this classic

68 Frings, Scheler, 93.

69 Frings, Scheler, 90. This will include a de-valuing of the value violated by or symbolized by the stronger group in the initial value-clash.

70 Frings, Scheler, 121-123.

71 Frings, Scheler, 123.

definition to need enlarging and redefining. To that end, he undertakes a study of human motivation that is neither abstract nor strictly metaphysical but rather personal, given to us in experience.

The fundamental category under which von Hildebrand analyzes human motivation is “importance.”\(^{73}\) That which has importance has the potential to motivate someone’s will and affective response.\(^{74}\) However, not all importance is of the same type. The objectively good has intrinsic importance, what von Hildebrand identifies as “value.”\(^{75}\) This objective goodness is in sharp contrast to the merely “subjectively satisfying,” which is only good from the restricted point of view of whether it gives one pleasure.\(^{76}\) Thankfully, the world is not divided entirely between these two types of importance; a third type combines the two, namely an “objective good for the person,” which is both objectively good and personally satisfying.\(^{77}\)

According to von Hildebrand’s analysis, it is in a way deceptive to use the same word, “importance,” to describe each of these three.\(^{78}\) That which has intrinsic value and that which is merely subjectively satisfying have no common denominator; “importance” means something different in each case.\(^{79}\) Both categories of


\(^{75}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 35-36.

\(^{76}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 34.

\(^{77}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 49-50. While he proposes these three categories, von Hildebrand’s analysis deals mainly with the contrast between the merely subjectively satisfying and the intrinsically important. He does not neglect the “objective good for the person,” but he does specify that the moral significance of this category is mainly reducible to its participation in that which is objectively good. Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 57.

\(^{78}\) In this way, von Hildebrand criticizes Scheler for not distinguishing different categories of importance to which feeling responds. Scheler’s mistake was to make every importance an objective good. He thereby saved the notion of objective goodness, but mistakenly reduced (or wrongly elevated) many purely subjective goods to it in the process. Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 43, 47-58.

\(^{79}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 39, 41.
importance are capable of causing feelings in us, in fact of causing delight. But the quality of the feelings—the nature of the delight—differs.\(^{80}\) While the merely subjectively satisfying can produce a kind of delight, true happiness is an “epiphenomenon,” for it “flows superabundantly” from the intrinsic importance of the good.\(^{81}\)

“Value” embodies the valid, the true, and the objectively important. It has a place in the order of fundamental notions, or transcendentals.\(^{82}\) The merely subjectively satisfying (henceforth, “satisfactions”) does not. The problem, of course, is that satisfactions play a fundamental role in our motivation, while in many concrete situations value does not appear to motivate us. The “objective good for the person” does appear to motivate us, but it is of ambiguous moral value when the objective good is a good for us; too easily we can pursue the right thing for the wrong reasons. When the objective good for a person is a good for another person, and not for us, then its importance has a clearer claim to providing motivation from objective goodness.\(^{83}\)

Von Hildebrand criticizes Aristotle’s thesis that we are free only with respect to the choice of means, not with respect to the choice of ends.\(^{84}\) Choice of value over satisfactions, von Hildebrand argues, is exactly a choice of ends. And the subject is free to choose between these goods; in fact, it is the most important moral choice the subject can make. Yes, the will can only tend toward the good. But the subject can deliberate about whether “the good” will be understood in a manner restricted to what


\(^{81}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 37.


\(^{83}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 58.

\(^{84}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 61.
is pleasurable to one, or whether the consideration of the good will be unrestricted, a search for what is truly of value.

In this analysis, von Hildebrand argues that value, true importance, is as fundamental a category as being.\textsuperscript{85} Value discloses itself to us, just as does being.\textsuperscript{86} In other words, all of reality has a valence with respect to goodness that is inherent and knowable. It is possible, in modern misconception, to picture being as the bare facticity of a thing and value as something added on, subsequent to being. Von Hildebrand rejects this modern misconception; there are no brute facts, meaning is inherent in the facticity of the universe, for the whole world in fact exists by God’s governance.\textsuperscript{87} Something is, and is good, with equal primacy, and value and being are both disclosed to us in self-transcendence.\textsuperscript{88}

Nothing in the universe, therefore, is purely subjectively satisfying with no objective importance.\textsuperscript{89} To approach something as merely subjectively satisfying is to be false to the nature of the universe. In seeking out merely subjective satisfactions, we miss out on the legitimate satisfaction of relating to objective goodness. In this way, our pride and concupiscence lead to the loss of the world, for in our disordered feelings we do not truly relate to the world.\textsuperscript{90}

To say that value is inherent in the meaning and being of the universe does not mean that value is reducible to logic. The datum of value is presupposed everywhere,

\textsuperscript{85} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 72.
\textsuperscript{86} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 104.
\textsuperscript{87} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 75, 78.
\textsuperscript{88} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 103-104.
\textsuperscript{89} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 81-82.
\textsuperscript{90} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 83.
but importance is understandable only in its own terms.\textsuperscript{91} Value is an irreducible element, and is presupposed in all moral reflection.\textsuperscript{92}

Value, according to von Hildebrand, has a status analogous to the self-evident.\textsuperscript{93} When our intelligence intuits a basic principle, it is grasping the self-evident.\textsuperscript{94} Knowing value must similarly be based on an original intuition, the important-in-itself revealing itself to us as an ultimate datum.\textsuperscript{95} However, this intuition of value is different from the intuition of the self-evident and never reduces to it.

Intrinsic value is a reflection of God, a participation in the divine goodness by contingent being.\textsuperscript{96} Von Hildebrand states,

We should understand that man’s transcendence is already manifested in his ability and vocation to realize moral values and to attain moral goodness, which are primarily attributed to God and only analogously to man. We cannot understand the nature of moral values, of the mysterious importance-in-itself of moral goodness, nor can we grasp the nature of its antithesis, moral wickedness, if we look at the moral sphere as a merely human one. That moral wickedness is not restricted to man is clearly revealed by the fact that Satan, the fallen angel, is the very embodiment of moral wickedness. And all human moral goodness is a foreshadowing of the \textit{similitudo Dei}.\textsuperscript{97}

That human beings live in the universe as moral agents, therefore, reflects their being made in the image of God.\textsuperscript{98} The saint, not the genius, is the one who always sees the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{91} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 73-74.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 75.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 102-103.
\item \textsuperscript{94} For example, the principle of identity, that A=A, which intelligence intuits and does not prove.
\item \textsuperscript{95} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 103-104.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 152.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 179.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Von Hildebrand distinguished six characteristics of moral values that differentiates them from other personal values (such as intellectual and aesthetic values): 1) we are held responsible for
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value inherent in being, for response to the value of the universe is really a response to God.  

To have a morally good attitude we must therefore conform our attitudes not only to factual limitations (by being intelligent and reasonable) but also to moral imperatives.  

We cannot deduce morality from reasonability, but once we do grasp morality we can see that it implies a higher kind of reasonability that makes sense of not just the facticity of the universe but also its value.  

Morality, that is, right response to value, does not just flow from our human nature but leads us beyond it in self-transcendence, for in right response to value we know and rightly judge the moral truth of the world.

In defining morality as the right relationship to value response, von Hildebrand means something quite particular by “value response.” He makes a number of distinctions, as evidenced by the following chart:

[See Figure 6, following page]

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moral values, and freedom of will is therefore required; 2) awareness of moral failure affects our conscience, indicating the seriousness of moral value; 3) they have an indispensable character, in that moral failure is seen as a failure not just of what we do but of who and what we are; 4) they relate to punishment and reward; 5) they are held in higher honor than other values; 6) the moral sphere has a privileged role in the relation between nature and super-nature, for the moral virtues find fulfillment in the theological virtues. Von Hildebrand, Ethics, 171-172, 177-178.

99 Von Hildebrand, Ethics, 150.

100 Von Hildebrand, Ethics, 183-184.

101 Von Hildebrand, Ethics, 184.

102 Von Hildebrand, Ethics, 187-189.
The most basic distinction von Hildebrand makes in human conscious life is among intentional experiences, non-intentional states and merely teleological trends.\footnote{Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 191. The entirety of human conscious life does not appear in the chart. Purely intellectual reasoning and mere passions, for example, are not included.} “Intentional” here is used in Husserl’s sense. Non-intentional states (such as fatigue or a good mood) have no conscious object; they do not transcend the mind.
of the one experiencing them.\textsuperscript{104} Merely teleological trends (such as hunger) do have an object (for instance, food). However, our intellect and will are not choosing these objects; rather we are just made to respond to them when subject to these trends, and the relationship established cannot be personal.\textsuperscript{105} Conversely, intentional experiences indicate some kind of perception and intellectual presence of an other that makes possible saying, “Yes,” to the existence of something.\textsuperscript{106} Intentional experiences “imply a consciously accomplished meaningful direction toward an object” manifesting our rational, personal character.\textsuperscript{107} We act as persons, as spiritual.

Within intentional experiences, von Hildebrand distinguishes among cognitive acts and intentional responses. Cognitive acts (such as imagination, memory, and perception, including perception of values) differ from intentional responses (such as belief, conviction, doubt, hope, fear, sorrow, joy, trust, mistrust, esteem, contempt, love, and hatred) in that cognitive acts are conscious of something whereas intentional responses are themselves consciously accomplished realities.\textsuperscript{108} Von Hildebrand describes the relation of cognitive acts and intentional responses as “the great dialogue between the person and being.”\textsuperscript{109} The content in a cognitive act is on the side of the object; in an intentional response the content is contained in our act of

\textsuperscript{104} Non-intentional states can have causes. For example, having been continuously awake for two days could cause one to experience fatigue. However, the state (in this case, fatigue) relates to these cause (prolonged wakefulness) merely as a cause and not as an intended object.

\textsuperscript{105} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 194-195.

\textsuperscript{106} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 192.

\textsuperscript{107} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 195.

\textsuperscript{108} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 195-196.

\textsuperscript{109} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 197.
response. Intentional responses presuppose cognitive acts, for the cognitive presence of the other occasions or allows the transcendence of a response.\textsuperscript{110}

Among intentional responses, von Hildebrand distinguishes theoretical, volitional, and affective responses. Theoretical responses (such as conviction, belief, and doubt) are connected to knowledge but not part of it.\textsuperscript{111} These responses are not fully free; the intention goes from us to the object, but we cannot produce them the way we can acts of will. Volitional responses relate to the will in a specific way. “Will” can be taken in a broader sense (in which all affective and volitional responses are included) or narrower sense (restricted to the specific act that is at the basis of all actions).\textsuperscript{112} Volitional responses include only the narrow sense, in which a response is directed toward something not yet real with the intention to bring it into existence.\textsuperscript{113} Volitional responses, alone of these three, are free completely.

Affective responses (such as joy or sorrow, esteem and contempt, love and hatred) share with volitional responses the theme of importance; both volitional and affective responses are aware of importance and motivated by it.\textsuperscript{114} Affective responses are most properly called “feelings,” and they are not free in the way the will is. One cannot engender an affective response merely by deciding upon it.\textsuperscript{115}

Affective responses are the voices of our heart. They contain an “affective plenitude” that is lacking in volitional responses.\textsuperscript{116} Affective responses impart to

\textsuperscript{110} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 197.
\textsuperscript{111} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 198.
\textsuperscript{112} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 199.
\textsuperscript{113} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 200.
\textsuperscript{114} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 202.
\textsuperscript{115} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 203.
\textsuperscript{116} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 202.
their object a “completing word” that is added to the knowledge we have received concerning the object.\textsuperscript{117} Contrary to volitional responses, they are not necessarily concerned with reality or unreality, nor do they have the power to command bodily (or other) action.\textsuperscript{118}

Von Hildebrand further distinguishes affective responses from both volitional responses and mere passions in his discussion of love (the supreme affective response). Love is always granted to us as a gift.\textsuperscript{119} Love involves the highest of feelings, but contrary to mere passions it also involves the whole person as spiritual and as free. Love does not command the person in her activities the way a volitional response does, yet love motivates the person as being drawn by delight.\textsuperscript{120}

Affective responses can be either personal or impersonal.\textsuperscript{121} The specific nature of the response’s object has a decisive effect on the character of the response. Some affective responses require a personal object; love and hatred are never fully themselves without a personal object.\textsuperscript{122}

Within the affective realm, there is also what von Hildebrand terms “being affected.”\textsuperscript{123} For example, one can be consoled or gladdened, afflicted or saddened. Being affected involves a “meaningful, intelligible relation” between the object that is

\textsuperscript{117} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 202.

\textsuperscript{118} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 203.

\textsuperscript{119} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 203.

\textsuperscript{120} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 204. Von Hildebrand here notes the way Augustine distinguishes the full affective plenitude of love from the actions of the will while still retaining the intentional, spiritual, meaningful character of love.

\textsuperscript{121} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 205.

\textsuperscript{122} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 207.

\textsuperscript{123} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 208.
affecting us and the effect “in our soul.” The effect produced within us will therefore have an intrinsic affinity, a correspondence in meaning and nature, with the object that affects us. There is an ontological dependence, in which the affective experience relates intelligibly to the object engendering it, affecting the center of our person.

Being affected differs from affective response in that being affected has a centripetal character (from the object to us) while affective response has a centrifugal character (from us to the object). The two are therefore distinct, but being affected normally precedes and is closely related to affective response. What matters most is the type of importance that motivates affective response: values or satisfactions. One can be affected by either values or satisfactions, but the character of the effect is different. The great work of moral pedagogy is the education of one’s feelings to respond to the right kind of value—the inherent importance of the objectively good.

The will (volitional response) can act independently of affective response. The will is free, and we can deny what we love and choose what we loathe. However, being affected by the importance of an object and the affective response one generates toward an object have great power to motivate volitional response.

A volitional response motivated by affective response to value has a character of self-abandonment. We conform ourselves to the important in itself. This is not the mere action of reason but based on a response to value. It is a self-donation, a

\[^{124}\text{Von Hildebrand, } Ethics, 208-209.\]
\[^{125}\text{Von Hildebrand, } Ethics, 209.\]
\[^{126}\text{Von Hildebrand, } Ethics, 210-211.\]
\[^{127}\text{Von Hildebrand, } Ethics, 210.\]
\[^{128}\text{Von Hildebrand, } Ethics, 213-214.\]
\[^{129}\text{Von Hildebrand, } Ethics, 214-215.\]
submission, a reverence toward what is truly good. Specifically, this volitional response is antagonistic toward our concupiscence and pride. Contrarily, a volitional response motivated by satisfactions imprisons us in ourselves. We refuse transcendence in service to our concupiscence and pride.

Knowing value in affective response is analogous to knowing truth through the use of reason. In knowing truth, we conform the action of our intellect to the being of an object. In knowing value, we conform our affective being to the value of an object.

The question is always one of sacrifice. Will we sacrifice the ignorance and interest of the self to the object, conforming to what is good and true, or will we sacrifice the nature of the object to our self-interest and the limitations of our knowledge? Our specific personhood, however, as human beings is in self-transcendence. Paradoxically, in sacrificing the self to the object we become true selves, transcending selves; in sacrificing the object to ourselves we lose our true selves.

Value presents itself to us in value perception. Von Hildebrand describes value perception as analogous to sensory perceptions such as sight:

The three decisive marks of perception in general distinguishing it from all other cognitive acts such as inferring, remembering, and others are: first, the real presence of the object; secondly, the fecundating contact with the object in which the object discloses itself to my mind, informs me, imposes itself on my mind in its autonomous being; thirdly, the intuitive character of the contact. The object

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deploy its “such being” before my mind as opposed to all discursive contact through concepts.\textsuperscript{135}

Just as the senses do not reason to their sensations, so also we do not reason to the fundamental perception of value. There is an intuition of a world that is present to us, in which we can perceive worth.

Again, there is an analogy with knowledge. Adequate knowledge of truth presupposes the integrity of our intellect, for to achieve true knowledge our process of thinking must be operating correctly. So also, adequate knowledge of value presupposes the rectitude of our will.\textsuperscript{136} Just as intellectual understandings and judgments can be resisted because they contradict what one presently believes, so also value perception can be resisted if it is in conflict with our self-interest. Especially, pride and concupiscence hinder the perception of moral values; authentic value is a scandal to these darker parts.\textsuperscript{137}

According to von Hildebrand, the greatest example of a value response is love.\textsuperscript{138} Love partakes in its object in a way analogous to knowledge, but superior to it.\textsuperscript{139} Love is the voice of our heart, for in love we adhere to the good from our core.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{135} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 229n37.

\textsuperscript{136} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 230.

\textsuperscript{137} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 230-231.

\textsuperscript{138} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 235. Value responses occur in volitional, affective, and theoretical modes, as shown above in the chart on responses. In a value response, there is some kind of union achieved with the value. In some way, the value is chosen, affirmed and embraced by the will, the affections or the intelligence. In the affective sphere, this response goes beyond being affected because, in value response, we impart a specific inner word to the object. See Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 234-235.

\textsuperscript{139} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 233. Just as there is a kind of identity of the intelligence with the object of knowledge, there is union with the beloved in love.

\textsuperscript{140} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 236-236. Von Hildebrand also here speaks of the unitive value of joy.
The meaningful correspondence between our inner word of a value response and the specific nature of the value of the object reveals the intimate and spiritual nature of the participation in a value response. Whereas a positive value necessarily motivates a positive response, a negative value necessarily motivates a negative response; a response that inverts this order must, according to von Hildebrand, be distorted by the choice of the subject to pursue satisfactions, not values. Also, the quality of the value response will correspond to the domain of the object’s value: moral response to moral values, intellectual response to intellectual values, aesthetic response to aesthetic values. Finally, the content of the value response is differentiated according to the specific quality of the object’s rank: abandonment in response to a sublime object, a mundane caring in response to a mundane object. The quality of the object thereby becomes the immanent norm for the value response.141

The degree of depth and completeness given in a value response therefore varies by the quality, advancement, or refinement of the person.142 Correspondence between the rank of an object’s value and the degree to which someone affirms it is of great importance for morality. Von Hildebrand here refers to Augustine’s *ordo amoris* and Pascal’s *logique du coeur*.143 In opposition to ethical systems that are concerned only with rightness of conduct, von Hildebrand points out that the moral order within a person is also of great ethical import. Greater values should be affirmed more completely; they should produce a deeper response in a person. To the extent that they do, a person is morally formed in her affective dimension, the dimension of her motivation. To the extent that a person does not, she is distorted and

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failing to respond in a moral way. The action of the will may still produce an externally right action, but the person is not responding to the good with a whole heart.

Some value responses (such as love or hatred) keep on affecting us even when we are not fully conscious of their effects.\textsuperscript{144} Love, for example, exists as a factor in our souls that informs our lives, colors every situation. Even when we are not consciously acting from one of these responses, it will affect our motivation and choices. Von Hildebrand names responses such as this, “superactual.”\textsuperscript{145} He considers that all the most important responses (deep sorrow, veneration, hatred, faith, love) can exist superactually. They can become a backdrop for our lives.

The significance of some value responses’ having a superactual character becomes clearer when one understands that every morally good value response implies the general will to be morally good, to act in a moral manner.\textsuperscript{146} The will to be morally good, to respond to true values simply because they are values, is itself a pure value response.\textsuperscript{147} In this attitude, one abandons oneself to moral goodness, to true value. When the will to respond to true value has become superactual in one, then one’s actions are capable of taking on a moral character.\textsuperscript{148}

In the last analysis, von Hildebrand sees this response as a response to God and the abandonment it involves as a manifestation of our love for God.\textsuperscript{149} This value

\textsuperscript{144} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 241-242.
\textsuperscript{145} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 242.
\textsuperscript{146} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 257.
\textsuperscript{147} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 257.
\textsuperscript{148} Von Hildebrand notes Scheler’s insight that our moral attitudes ride on the shoulders of our other attitudes and actions. Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 261.
\textsuperscript{149} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 258.
response to God is the “indispensible presupposition for true self-love, which is to be found only in the good man.”\(^{150}\) Only by abandoning ourselves to the ultimate value of God, as motivated by love for God, can we rightly order ourselves toward the lesser values of this world. As a superactual value response, the love of God comes to trans-value all other values.

As von Hildebrand says, “In the light of God, everything morally relevant reveals itself in a much more luminous way, with a greater significance, and our interest in it becomes deeper and more intense.”\(^{151}\) In the saint, one who is in complete abandonment to God, moral consciousness reaches its peak. The saint does not lose sight of the other values in the world, but every other value is sublated by the love of God.\(^{152}\)

Value responses affect moral action through motivation. Although our will is free, it does not act without some motivation; else, willing would be completely arbitrary (in the modern English, not the Latin root sense), and neither meaningful nor spiritual.\(^{153}\) Motivation does not determine the will, for one can choose against one’s motivation, but motivation does affect the will. The intentional, spiritual character of the will is rooted in the act of knowledge. That is, the freedom of willing is that we may accept or decline the invitation of an object of will.\(^{154}\) In the freedom of willing, we begin a new chain of causality, for our actions are not necessitated by anything prior to them.\(^{155}\)

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\(^{150}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 259.

\(^{151}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 275.


\(^{154}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 290.

The difference between willing and affective response (motivation) is that willing never comes by itself as a gift. Willing always implies some free decision, though not independent of some motive, supported by the importance of some object. Willing is always turning to an object, freely, because of its importance.\textsuperscript{156}

The main task of human free will is rightly to distinguish and choose that which is of value over mere satisfactions.\textsuperscript{157} True happiness (which differs greatly in quality from self-centered happiness) by its nature cannot be directly intended; it cannot be the end of our actions. It must be attained as a gift, as something bestowed on those who have made their chosen end that which is truly of value and abandoned themselves to the truly good for its own sake.\textsuperscript{158}

Unlike the will, affective response itself is not completely free. One cannot simply choose to love or hate something, or to revere something one disvalues. The power of free choice with respect to our affective responses is seen in sanction and disavowal.\textsuperscript{159} When one is affected by or produces an affective response toward an object of true value, it is moral freely to choose to sanction the affection or response. Conversely, when one is affected by or produces an affective response toward an object not of true value, it is moral freely to choose to disavow the affection or response. One can (and should) likewise sanction those affections and responses in proper proportion to their object’s value, and disavow those out of proportion. In sanctioning an affection or an affective response, one unites oneself to it freely. True moral sanction is not merely a judgment from without; one says not merely, “This is

\textsuperscript{156} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 291.

\textsuperscript{157} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 306.

\textsuperscript{158} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 309. But this is love.

\textsuperscript{159} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 324.
approved,” but, “I will become this.”\textsuperscript{160} It becomes what one is. Disavowal does not remove an affection or response from one, but it diffuses the power of the affection or response, refusing it a place in one’s person and moral order. Sanction, likewise, does not directly produce an affective response, but “prepares the ground” for the right responses.\textsuperscript{161}

Over time, sanction and disavowal take on the character of moral education and shape the way one is affected and affectively responds. To last over time, and to have a truly moral character, moral sanction or disavowal must be rooted in the superactual attitude to choose the good for its own sake.\textsuperscript{162} The presence or absence of this superactual attitude has a great effect on whether one will develop right affections and give right responses through sanction and disavowal.\textsuperscript{163}

Von Hildebrand sees the action of God as necessary for one to develop the superactual attitude to choose the good for its own sake. The enmity of our pride to objective value places us in a situation of moral enslavement.\textsuperscript{164} Likewise, our concupiscence indicates within us the deeply disordered state of our motivations. The superactual attitude toward the good is therefore a cooperative freedom.\textsuperscript{165} Our freedom reaches its deepest stratum in moral sanction, in which we freely unite ourselves to a right value response.\textsuperscript{166} This free choice is made possible, however, by cooperating with the gift of God’s love.

\textsuperscript{160} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 330.
\textsuperscript{161} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 338.
\textsuperscript{162} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 326.
\textsuperscript{163} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 332.
\textsuperscript{164} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 329.
\textsuperscript{165} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 341.
\textsuperscript{166} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 334.
In love, the inner word that affective response donates to the object has a unique perfection. Love indicates the greatest possible interest in the other, the most intimate and radical union with the good.\textsuperscript{167} In love, as in some of the other superior value responses, there is inherent moral value.\textsuperscript{168} Normally, a value response derives its value from the good with which it unites, but love has a more plenteous and original inner word that has value of its own.

Charity, the highest true love, has a mysterious aspect of spontaneity.\textsuperscript{169} This value response has a superabundant character in its goodness that surpasses the necessary proportion of the value response. In other words, charity is not limited in its response by the goodness of the object, but is capable of going beyond the constraints of mere justice.\textsuperscript{170}

According to von Hildebrand, love’s spontaneously overflowing generosity is seen preeminently in God’s love for us.\textsuperscript{171} Our loving spontaneity is possible as a response to the divine love, and it is a unique partaking in the divine love itself. Charity is the actualization of the inmost center of all our moral goodness.\textsuperscript{172} It indicates not some mere dynamism active in us but the utmost interest in the object of charity. Humans cannot conceive of such love outside of our receiving revelation;

\textsuperscript{167} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 352.
\textsuperscript{168} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 353. Von Hildebrand names gratitude as another of these highest value responses.
\textsuperscript{169} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 356.
\textsuperscript{170} Von Hildebrand here criticizes Scheler for not explicitly separating charity from mere exuberance.
\textsuperscript{171} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 356.
\textsuperscript{172} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 357.
partaking in charity reflects our receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit that regenerates us and ennobles our natural moral life.\textsuperscript{173}

As stated above, the backbone of every true virtue is some superactual value response.\textsuperscript{174} Von Hildebrand goes on to add that some superactual responses can become general in character. They respond not to some single good but to an entire set of goods or certain type of value in general.\textsuperscript{175} Among such general superactual value responses, von Hildebrand specifically mentions love, faith, and our hope of heaven.\textsuperscript{176}

General superactual value responses connote our fundamental attitudes that underlie all of our other attitudes.\textsuperscript{177} They are situated at a deeper stratum of our person than other value responses. They can respond either to values or to satisfactions. While they can have either a fully conscious or seemingly incidental character, in fact we constantly refer to these underlying attitudes; they come to characterize our personality.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{173} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 356-357.

\textsuperscript{174} Otherwise, the virtue is a mere isolated value response and not indicative of virtuous habits formed in the person. But a true virtue must flow from virtuous habits.

\textsuperscript{175} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 358.

\textsuperscript{176} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 358.

\textsuperscript{177} Von Hildebrand offers as an example of a general superactual attitude \textit{versus} a mere superactual attitude the difference between being sensitive to artistic beauty in general \textit{versus} being sensitive to artistic beauty in music. The man who is sensitive to artistic beauty in general, for example, may not be sensitive to artistic beauty in music, but he may be sensitive to artistic beauty in the visual arts. Mozart would not stir him, but Monet might speak to his soul. However, his sensitivity to artistic beauty in general underlies and allows him to possess the attitude of being sensitive to artistic beauty in the visual arts. A man who is not sensitive to artistic beauty at all (lacking the general superactual attitude) would not give an adequate response to any of the aesthetic ventures of the human spirit. He could appreciate the technical precision of Bach or Rembrandt, but he would not adequately realize their work as artists. See Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 360.

\textsuperscript{178} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 358.
Among general superactual attitudes, some are more general than others.\textsuperscript{179} All of them underlie mere superactual attitudes, but whereas something like sensitivity to artistic beauty underlies one’s attitudes toward the various aspects of the aesthetic realm, something like love underlies one’s attitudes toward all that is.\textsuperscript{180} The most general of the superactual value responses condition and motivate all of our other value responses, including the other superactual attitudes.

By von Hildebrand’s analysis, there are two most general superactual value responses.\textsuperscript{181} The greatest is one’s value response to God. The second is like it, namely, one’s attitude toward moral value (as more important to one than mere satisfactions, or not).\textsuperscript{182}

These two most general superactual value responses make moral living possible. Being morally conscious is not just to respond to or recognize right and wrong but to understand and grasp moral values in their proper, majestic significance.\textsuperscript{183} God is the greatest of all values, and is both entirely singular and the

\textsuperscript{179} Any superactual value response is persistently manifested by a subject over time. A general superactual value response treats, at least, an entire class of objects. For example, a woman could like a particular dog and always respond favorably to that dog. That would be a superactual value response; even when the dog is not present, she still likes the dog. She would also, to some extent, necessarily be a lover of dogs, in general. A love of dogs, in general, would indicate a general superactual value response toward dogs. (The general superactual value response may be actuated quite restrictedly. For example, she may, in fact, love only that dog. However, if she did not possess “dog-lovingness” to some extent, there would be nothing to actuate in order to form her particular love of that one dog.) One can proceed to a broader category of objects, and picture the woman as having the more general superactual value response of being an animal lover. To love a particular dog, and to love dogs in general, requires to some extent the more general superactual value response of loving animals. However, the more general superactual response does not necessarily indicate that every possible manifestation of loving animals is present in the woman. She might, for some reason, hate cats or iguanas. Rather, the more general superactual value response underlies the less general and particular value responses, making them possible and increasing the likelihood that the less general and particular value responses will occur.

\textsuperscript{180} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 360.

\textsuperscript{181} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 361.

\textsuperscript{182} See Luke 10:27 and parallel passages.

\textsuperscript{183} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 366.
summum bonum of every other good. Therefore, responding to God is the core of morality in humans; responding to God is the greatest possible moral response, the one thing necessary, and it is consciousness of God that allows all other values to be seen correctly, in their proper character and order.\textsuperscript{184} The general superactual response to moral value is the heart of every virtue, for true virtue requires an apprehension of values and a surrender to them that is more or less conscious and is sustained over time.\textsuperscript{185}

Von Hildebrand speaks of these most general superactual value responses as having a role in our motivation similar to a “kind of psychological law of gravity.”\textsuperscript{186} Superactual value responses can increase the attractiveness of an object and give motivating power to something that might otherwise be neutral or even repelling. They do not automatically generate volitional responses, nor do they automatically generate other superactual value responses that are subsequent to them.\textsuperscript{187} But when they come to pervade a person, they affect the feelings (affections) and fundamental attitudes of that person.\textsuperscript{188}

Most significantly, the general superactual value response of being in love with God is basic to the development of the general superactual value response of pursuing the good for its own sake.\textsuperscript{189} Being in love with God does not automatically produce the attitude in one that pursues value over satisfactions, but when the love of God has pervaded a person, it is more probable that that person would learn to pursue

\textsuperscript{184} See Luke 10:42.
\textsuperscript{185} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 361 and 364.
\textsuperscript{186} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 372.
\textsuperscript{187} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 362.
\textsuperscript{188} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 374-375.
\textsuperscript{189} Von Hildebrand, \textit{Ethics}, 361-362.
the good for its own sake. Without the love of God, the subsequent moral choice is unlikely at best and probably impossible.

Why is being in love with God necessary for having the general superactual value response of preferring value for its own sake? To change from being a vicious to a virtuous person requires not a gradual movement from one vicious extreme toward another, contra Aristotle. It is a change in the underlying general superactual value response, moving from seeking satisfactions to seeking value. But the vices are all outgrowths in us of concupiscence and pride. To achieve the necessary general superactual value response toward the good, one must therefore address and kill the underlying problems of those root vices.

In similar vein, the moral center of a person is her superactual attitude toward love. According to von Hildebrand, one’s moral character can be united in a superactual attitude that chooses to interact with the universe according to love or divided between two immoral attitudes that choose to interact with the world according to pride and concupiscence. These moral centers indicate one’s fundamental approach to the universe.

All three of these centers (the moral center of love and the immoral centers of pride and concupiscence) can be found in the average person. The question is which of them predominates. In a person of developing moral character, the person fundamentally wills value, although the war against pride and concupiscence continues. A morally unconscious person essentially will try to serve all three

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centers, whereas a morally compromising person will realize the struggle, want to be moral, but be ineffective in that commitment because he has not fundamentally committed himself to the good. The fanatic will appear to be serving the good, but will do so because it serves her concupiscence or pride; this is a deeper stage of immorality. Finally, concupiscence and pride can dominate a person in *ressentiment*. In this final stage, the person experiences pride and concupiscence as a kind of fate.\(^{195}\)

Achieving a general superactual value response in which one chooses the good for its own sake, therefore, will require the dethronement of concupiscence and pride. It will also require the person to be rightly ordered in love, part of the *ordo amoris*, in rejection of the path to *ressentiment*.\(^{196}\) But only God’s love is capable of achieving these two results. It is infused charity that breaks the strangle-hold of pride and concupiscence in us.\(^{197}\) It is also infused charity, cooperated with, which places us in the order of love, for every value response is implicitly a response to God.\(^{198}\) But these are the work of the Holy Spirit, converting us to God, who is both the greatest good and the greatest good of every other good. Therefore, the general superactual value response to God both sublates and makes possible the general superactual value response to the good. More than that, the general superactual value response toward God makes it probable that one will develop the general superactual value response

\(^{195}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 417-418. Von Hildebrand draws on Scheler regarding *ressentiment*, except because von Hildebrand’s breakdown of basic moral character has six stages (the five detailed above plus the saint) instead of Scheler’s two (ordered love versus *ressentiment*), von Hildebrand reserves true *ressentiment* for the deeply depraved person.


\(^{197}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 461-462.

\(^{198}\) Von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 457.
toward the good, if that higher value response has come to suffuse one’s character.

For to love God is to love the good. 199

Lonergan’s Appropriation

Lonergan transposes the valid insights of Scheler and von Hildebrand into the context of transcendental method. Many of the ways Lonergan does this will be clear from my preceding chapters, and I will not try to explain every one. However, by examining Method in concert with relevant portions of Lonergan’s other writings, one can see considerable ways Lonergan puts Scheler and von Hildebrand to use, especially in the notions of feelings, the conversions, and judgments of value. 200

To begin with, one must remember the context of Lonergan’s former writings. In Insight, three levels or phases of conscious intentionality are explained: experiencing, understanding and judging. Lonergan then explained moral judgments as a category of the third phase (judgment). There is an objectivity about the moral ordering of the universe, and a true moral judgment is a judgment of fact about what is right. 201

In Method in Theology, Lonergan differentiates a fourth level of intentional consciousness: deciding. That judgments of value are part of this fourth level indicates a qualitative difference between them and judgments of fact. Judgments of fact intend the objectively real, and the process of knowing the real is governed by the

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199 As a concluding note, perhaps the reader has waited for Scheler or von Hildebrand’s interaction with Schleiermacher, the great exponent of religious feeling. Interestingly, Schleiermacher’s name occurs neither in Frigs’ presentation of Scheler nor in von Hildebrand’s Christian Ethics.

200 See Conn, Christian Conversion, 136-153, for the place Lonergan’s notion of affectivity has in the flow of 20th century psychological and philosophical thought.

201 See Insight, 626. Ethical judgments are a “prolongation” of metaphysics into the realm of human doing.
transcendental notion of being. Judgments of value intend the objectively valuable, and the process of knowing value is governed by the transcendental notion of value.\textsuperscript{202}

The differentiation of the fourth level of intentional consciousness constitutes one of the major advances of \textit{Method}. One can see the influence of von Hildebrand’s differentiation of being and importance and Scheler’s exploration of the realm of values. However, Lonergan also makes a major advance beyond Scheler and von Hildebrand by showing how apprehension of value is integrated with the intellectual aspect of human knowing. Scheler and von Hildebrand differentiate between value known affectively and being known intellectually; while they do not intend to bifurcate the human spirit between intellectual and affective parts, it is hard to see how they integrate them effectively. Interiority analysis allows Lonergan to explain the sets of proximate and remote relations among the different phases of our conscious operations, and among the kinds, elements, functions, realms, and stages of meaning. Apprehension and judgment of value are thereby placed among a unified and coherent human subject’s related and recurrent conscious operations.

As revealed by interiority analysis, knowing being and knowing value are similar to each other and related, but they are not identical. “Judgments of value differ in content but not in structure from judgments of fact.”\textsuperscript{203} Both judgments of fact and judgments of value seek to know meaning that is independent of the subject; judgments of fact seek what is objectively true, judgments of value what is objectively good.\textsuperscript{204} Both types of judgment stress the distinction between the criterion of

\textsuperscript{202} Lonergan, “Judgments of Value,” 142-143.

\textsuperscript{203} Lonergan, “Judgments of Value,” 144.

\textsuperscript{204} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 37. In judgments of value, one can approve or disapprove of something that does not actually, or yet, exist. Judgments of fact, by definition, seek to know the real, or what already exists.
knowing and the meaning known. In both cases, the criterion is the self-transcendence of the subject, but while judgments of fact produce only intellectual self-transcendence, judgments of value tend toward moral self-transcendence.\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 37.}

It is therefore in judgments of value that we constitute ourselves as “proximately capable of moral self-transcendence, of benevolence and beneficence, of true loving.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 37.} Real (moral) self-transcendence requires doing the good that we know, which is a free action and is affected but not determined by our judgments of value. We know the good we should do through judgments of value.

Judgments of value are either simple or comparative.\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 36.} One either judges whether or not some object is good (truly, not just apparently), or one judges whether or not one object is better than another object. The influence of Scheler is clear in this basic definition of a value judgment.

Judgments of value unite three main components.\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 38.} First, and this is a significant departure from Scheler and von Hildebrand, one must have “knowledge of reality and especially of human reality.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 38.} Scheler and von Hildebrand are concerned to establish and defend the independence and priority of the realm of value. Interiority analysis allows Lonergan to give affective insight its proper priority while showing its relation to the realm of intellectual knowledge. One may note the affective insights Lonergan explains transpose Scheler’s emotional insights into the horizon of transcendental method.

Secondly, there are “intentional responses to values.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 38.} Following Frederick Lawrence, I have named these intentional responses “affective insights.”
non-intentional states or trends. Finally, there is “the initial thrust toward moral self-
transcendence constituted by the judgment of value itself.”211

All three elements are necessary for an adequate judgment of value. Good
moral judgment devoid of proper knowledge often does more harm than good. However, a great knowledge of the world and human life will not produce an
adequate judgment of value without development and cultivation of one’s moral
feeling. Adequate knowledge and developed moral feeling need an outlet, and this
outlet turns out to be more than the production of a judgment of value. Through the
development of knowledge and moral feeling, one can discover oneself as a moral
being; in our choices, we not only choose what is good but thereby become authentic
or unauthentic human beings.212

Our affections are of great importance to both Scheler and von Hildebrand in
knowing the realm of value. Lonergan appropriates these insights under the term,
“feelings.”213 In this seemingly innocuous word hides much of the burden of the
affective relations discussed by Scheler and von Hildebrand.


Knowing the Human Good in the Euthanasia Debate*, Lonergan Studies (Toronto: University of
Toronto, 2005), 78-81, for a discussion of “affect” and its meaning in Lonergan’s writings. With him, I
am using “affect” and “affective” as cognate with feelings that are intentional responses to value,
neither mere passions nor non-intentional states and trends. As Sullivan notes, the definition and role
of feelings and affects has been controversial in Lonergan studies. See, for a discussion of part of this
175. My own position, which will be clear from the present section, is that within Lonergan’s writings
leading up to and closely following *Method in Theology*, the actions of feelings, including love, serve
as proximate or remote (proper or improper) components of the four phases of intentional
consciousness, not as something subsequent to those four phases. “Improper” does not mean
“subsequent or extrinsic.” Even considering Lonergan’s latest writings, what feeling, and especially
love, cannot intelligibly become is something truly subsequent to the four phases mentioned here—
“that which one should go on to after the other phases.” For without the presence of love as a
proximate or remote condition, there is no right operation of any phase of consciousness.
In the chapter of *Method* on “The Human Good,” Lonergan begins a discussion of feelings in which he refers to both von Hildebrand and Scheler.\(^{214}\)

Following von Hildebrand, Lonergan begins by distinguishing intentional responses from non-intentional states and trends.\(^{215}\) Feeling is an intentional response that relates us not merely to a goal or end but to an object.\(^{216}\) The motivation that suffuses our conscious intentionality comes from feelings as they “give intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power” and orient us “massively and dynamically in a world mediated by meaning.”\(^{217}\) The importance that objects and classes of objects have, or could have, is apprehended by us through feelings.\(^{218}\)

Lonergan specifies two classes of objects regarded by intentional responses: 1) the agreeable and disagreeable, and 2) values, which can be either the “ontic” value of persons or the qualitative values of beauty, understanding, truth, noble acts, or virtuous deeds.\(^{219}\) The same object can be regarded as both agreeable and valuable, but often agreeableness and value conflict.\(^{220}\) Values are also known in a hierarchy;
one develops, or should develop, a scale of preferences in which vital values give way to social ones, social to cultural, cultural to personal, and personal to religious. Lonergan here appropriates von Hildebrand’s threefold classification of that which is merely satisfying, that which is intrinsically important, and that which is an objective good for the person, and also Scheler’s hierarchy of values.

Hereby, Lonergan indicates that value apprehension and judgments of value are remote criteria for the operation of the first three phases of intentional consciousness. Our conscious operations in these stages only function well when they are following their governing transcendental precepts (“be attentive” for phase one, “be intelligent” for stage two, “be reasonable” for stage three). However, the qualitative value of understanding and truth, which are the goals of the second and third phases, is known to us through feelings. The inherent value of the things to which we are attending (in phase one) is known to one through feelings. The transcendental precepts themselves are distinct from affective insight; for example, intelligence does not care, properly speaking, how one feels concerning something but simply wants to know what is true. The motivation to follow the transcendental precepts, however, to truly let intelligence, attentiveness and responsibility have free reign, is given to one through feelings (intentional responses to value).

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221 Lonergan, *Method*, 31. Ideally, the higher values will sublate the lower values, but it is probable that in fact one will often have to choose between higher and lower values.

222 They are, of course, direct criteria for the operation of the fourth stage of intentional consciousness (deliberating and deciding).

223 As Lonergan says, “We are so endowed that we not only ask questions leading to self-transcendence, not only can recognize correct answers constitutive of intentional self-transcendence, but also respond with the very stirring of our being when we glimpse the possibility or actuality of moral self-transcendence.” Lonergan, *Method*, 38.
Feelings are not merely transient in nature but can persist over time. Feelings can come and go quickly, and they can also persist in a “subterranean” existence due to being repressed. However, some feelings in full consciousness are “so deep and strong, especially when deliberately reinforced, that they channel attention, shape one’s horizon, direct one’s life.” For instance, in the greatest example—loving—the particular loving thoughts, feelings, words, and actions do not constitute the entire bond of love between two people. Prior to the particular instances in which love is felt or shown, there is a state of being in love that makes an “I” and a “Thou” into a “We.” This prior state is conscious, and while the lover is not focally aware of it at all times, its direction and motivation is implicit in all his actions and attitudes.

Here one can see the way Lonergan transposes von Hildebrand’s notion of superactual value response (which itself develops Scheler’s notion of feeling-states) into the context of transcendental method. Lonergan makes most powerful use of this notion in understanding and explaining what he calls “conversion.” For religious and moral conversion are largely cognate with von Hildebrand’s two most general superactual value responses, transposed to within the horizon of Method.

Lonergan’s notion of conversion and von Hildebrand’s notion of general superactual value response are not exactly the same. In conversion, Lonergan specifies that a change has happened, an about-face in which the subject has performed or enacted a vertical exercise of freedom and entered a new horizon. Superactual value response does not necessarily indicate a change in the subject,

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224 Lonergan, Method, 32-33.
225 Lonergan, Method, 32.
226 Lonergan, Method, 32-33.
although it probably might indicate it. Also, von Hildebrand is writing from within
the context of faculty psychology, whereas Lonergan has developed transcendental
method, with all the changes I specified in my second chapter. Finally, it is hard to
see how general superactual value response could be stretched to include intellectual
conversion. Von Hildebrand, in my opinion, is simply working too hard to establish
an independent zone for affections to allow “knowing that one is a knower, and
knowing what that means,” to be something his ethics explicitly treats.227 Within the
context of interiority analysis, by contrast, Lonergan is able to make three intelligibly
analogical uses of conversion in which vertical exercises of freedom transform one
with respect to truth, goodness and love.

That being said, one can see a great continuity between moral conversion and
the most general superactual value response to the good. Second only to one’s
experience of God is the choice whether one will live for values or satisfactions. This
is a free choice of ends, something Lonergan addresses by the ability of vertical
exercises of freedom to select among horizons, not merely choose within the context
of a horizon. It sets limits for all of one’s lesser value responses, apprehensions and
judgments by specifying what kind of good (true or merely self-serving) one is
willing to seek. In that the choice to follow the transcendental precepts is essentially a
moral decision, moral conversion thereby becomes a basic (either proximate or
remote) condition for the probability that one’s conscious operations will operate
correctly in each phase of operation.

Similarly, one can see great continuity between religious conversion and the
general superactual value response to God. This is the fundamental fact about one’s

227 In von Hildebrand’s defense, Christian Ethics is more a work in “foundations of ethics”
than a full outworking of ethics. It would certainly be possible in other works for him better to
integrate the role of rationality with ethics.
existence, moral or otherwise. Being in love with God conditions all of one’s other value responses, apprehensions and judgments, becoming the self-transcending context within which all of one’s value apprehensions and value judgments occur.

In examining religious and moral conversion in the light of von Hildebrand’s two most general superactual value responses, one can also better understand how religious and moral conversion are related. The general superactual value response toward God is necessary for the general superactual value response toward the good because to achieve that response toward the good one must escape the domination of concupiscence and pride. But both of these vices are only healed by infused charity, the gift of God’s love.

The main difficulty is that we need to repent. Only a bad person needs to repent, but only a good person can repent; for repentance is neither easy nor pleasant, and it is viciously opposed by our concupiscence and pride. However, one could be transformed in one’s heart by a gift of love to which one could freely respond. No human being could effect such a gift, but as Ignatius Loyola stated, it is exactly the prerogative of the Creator thus to enter the human soul. This is the most fundamental religious experience, being transformed into one who is in love with God, and it is religious conversion.

One can also point out that in a fallen human being, the general superactual value response toward the good needs a reference point for knowing what is good. As Lonergan explains in his analysis of sin (bias, decline, absurdity, alienation), irrationality and irresponsibility have become normal for us. Even should we desire to follow the good, it is difficult for us to know what it is. But an apprehension of transcendent value, as a gift, could give us a true orientation toward the good in our

\[\text{228 Here, as in many other places, one can see the Augustinian character of Lonergan’s later theology.}\]
conscious operations. Such is religious conversion, and in this way it allows moral conversion to be something real and effective.\textsuperscript{229}

The general superactual value response to God also makes it more probable that one will develop the general superactual value response to the good. Once the value response to God has come to suffuse one’s soul, one more probably comes to see other goods in the light of God, who is both the greatest good and also the greatest good of every other good. In Lonergan’s terms, religious conversion enacts a probability schedule that makes moral conversion more likely to develop. Religious conversion alters one’s scales of preference by orienting them toward a true good and motivating the person toward that true good by love. It thereby becomes more probable that the subject will be able to escape the domination of her ego and her group, and be able to commit herself to living for what is truly of value. For benevolence and beneficence are natural for a person in love. In that God is both the greatest good and also the greatest good of every other good, it is natural for the love the religiously converted subject has for God to motivate genuine concern toward the world as related to God.

To continue Lonergan’s explanation of feelings, just as skills can develop over time, so can feelings.\textsuperscript{230} Fundamentally, feelings are spontaneous and do not respond to the command of decision the way bodily movements do.\textsuperscript{231} However, once they have arisen they may be either reinforced by advertence and sanction or curtailed by

\textsuperscript{229} Here again one can see the necessity of religious conversion’s relating one to something absolutely supernatural. For no created value is capable of trans-valuing every created value (that is, of orienting one correctly toward the greatest good).

\textsuperscript{230} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 32.

\textsuperscript{231} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 32.
distraction and disapproval. 232 One can here see the influence of von Hildebrand’s sanction and disavowal of affections and affective responses. Lonergan, with von Hildebrand, believed that this reinforcement and disavowal could have a powerful effect on one’s scale of preferences. An important part of education, for Lonergan, is the education of our feelings:

Again, feelings are enriched and refined by attentive study of the wealth and variety of the objects that arouse them, and so no small part of education lies in fostering and developing a climate of discernment and taste, of discriminating praise and carefully worded disapproval, that will conspire with the student’s own capacities and tendencies, enlarge and deepen his apprehension of values, and help him toward self-transcendence. 233

One cannot simply enter into one’s heart and change the logic it follows. God can do this, and the result is religious conversion. However, it is given to us to cooperate with the gracious work of God. In educating one’s feelings, or in fostering that education in others, one can enter into that conspiracy with the Divine that culminates in religious belief, religious hope, and religious love.

One can also, of course, refuse to do so. Not all developments of our feelings are positive. Just as one can be transformed by the gift of God’s love, one can also choose ressentiment. Lonergan describes ressentiment as the most notable of the aberrations of feeling. 234 It is significant in this respect that he follows Scheler (as Scheler revises Nietzsche) and not von Hildebrand. 235 For von Hildebrand, ressentiment has a very limited occurrence; one sees it only in those diabolically dominated by pride. 236 For Scheler, ressentiment is one of life’s two basic options:

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232 Lonergan, Method, 32.
233 Lonergan, Method, 32.
234 Lonergan, Method, 33.
235 Lonergan, Method, 33.
236 Von Hildebrand, Ethics, 417-418.
rightly ordered love, or ressentiment. Ressentiment is a kind of “psychic poisoning” in which all of our value scales become distorted or inverted. 237 It is the result of repetition, when the feelings associated with some original value conflict in which one’s values were violated by a stronger party are repeated within a person to become the background that guides the direction of his life.

Possibly, Lonergan uses the insights he garnered from Maslow to help him appropriate Scheler’s notion of ressentiment, to set up a powerful counterpoint to religious conversion. As I explained in chapter six, in religious conversion the dynamic orientation of being in love with God acts as a kind of peak state, in which a person who otherwise would not expect to live authentically more probably does so. Ressentiment functions the opposite way. Perhaps ressentiment’s “worst feature is that its rejection of one value [due to having been injured relative to that value in a value conflict] involves a distortion of the whole scale of values and this distortion can spread through a whole social class, a whole people, a whole epoch.” 238 If my hunch about Maslow’s influence is correct, by distorting a person’s or group’s whole value scale, ressentiment acts as a kind of negative opposite to a peak state (a depressed or valley state?) in which a person becomes less likely than one would otherwise expect to live authentically. 239

237 Frings, Scheler, 83.

238 Lonergan, Method, 33. Explanation in brackets added.

239 There are many other ways than ressentiment that one can come to live unauthentically. Most of the factors discussed under Lonergan’s analysis of sin can probably also function as negative peak states (certainly the biases do, and ressentiment would promote the establishment, at least, of group and individual bias, and the bias of the unconscious motivations). However, because Lonergan names ressentiment as probably the most significant aberration of feeling, it is placed in sharp contrast to religious conversion’s gift of an orientation to transcendent love.

As is religious conversion, ressentiment is understandable through emergent probability. The person who has chosen ressentiment can, on any given occasion, deliberate and possibly choose rightly. But ressentiment will function as a statistical law that makes it more probable that a person will choose wrongly. Ressentiment functions in a particularly perfidious way in this process, for the person could have a desire to choose rightly in a given situation, yet consistently chooses wrongly because ressentiment is blocking her from having right affective insights.
Lonergan makes it clear that, in contrast to *ressentiment*, it is much better to take full cognizance of one’s feelings. Thereby one knows oneself, and uncovers the “inattention, obtuseness, silliness, and irresponsibility that give rise to the feeling one does not want.” Two aspects of Lonergan’s explanation here deserve special notice. First, feelings, like other elements of our conscious operations, come into being relative to the transcendental precepts; for inattention opposes attentiveness, obtuseness opposes intelligence, silliness opposes reasonableness, and irresponsibility opposes responsibility. Feelings are distinct from the operations of our consciousness that directly produce understanding and judgment, but they are produced according to the same guiding norms. Lonergan is thereby able to envision a unified human consciousness, because all of our conscious operations respond (or fail to respond) to the transcendental notions of being and value. Second, to correct our aberrant feelings requires both coming to be aware of them and approving or disapproving of them relative to the transcendental precepts. Not to take cognizance of them is to leave them “in the twilight of what is conscious but not objectified,” which some psychologists have called the unconscious. The conflict that thereby arises “between the self as conscious and the self as objectified” can lead not just to the fatal dynamic of *ressentiment* but also to the “misguided remedies” of the various neuroses. A successful therapy for the human spirit, then, will bring one to know

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*Ressentiment* is incompatible with love, for it is a covert hatred of a person or group. It is also a covert hatred of a true value symbolized or instantiated by that person or group at some past time of value conflict. While opposing feelings are capable of existing together in a way that logical entities cannot, over time *ressentiment* and love will conflict, as one or the other comes to suffuse one’s conscious operations.


241 Lonergan, *Method*, 34. Please see my discussion under dramatic bias in chapter five concerning Lonergan’s use of “conscious” and “unconscious” in *Insight* and in *Method*.

oneself as one truly is, sorting out and enlightening that which is known and that which is hidden, but will also help one to shape the preference scales according to which one’s feelings arise.\textsuperscript{243} A fully functioning human knows the true and loves the good, and health for the human spirit is to inculcate these norms.

Just as there is an intelligibility to the way our feelings come to be, there is an intelligibility in the way they are related. “Feelings are related to objects, to one another, and to their subject.”\textsuperscript{244} In one respect, the relation of feelings to their objects is straightforward: one desires a fine meal, or regrets a friend’s misfortune.\textsuperscript{245} In their relation to each other, Lonergan explains both the intelligible progression and the intelligible grouping of feelings. Feelings intelligibly progress through changes in their object. For example, one first fears an absent evil, then becomes downhearted at its approach, and then sad in its presence.\textsuperscript{246} Feelings are intelligibly grouped according to personal relationships, and the grouping can either occur concomitantly or in sequence (a kind of progression, but specifically having to do with personal relations). Concomitantly, love, gentleness, tenderness and intimacy go together, as do alienation, harshness, violence and cruelty.\textsuperscript{247} In sequence, contumacy following an offence intelligibly motivates judgment and punishment, whereas repentance following the same offence could intelligibly motivate apology and forgiveness.\textsuperscript{248}

\textsuperscript{243} Lonergan notes the emergence of psychologists (Maslow, and those Maslow reckoned as a “Third Force”) who have raised the question as to whether psychological illness is a purely medical problem, or whether an essential problem is the subject’s real (not just felt or imagined) guilt. Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 69.

\textsuperscript{244} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 64.

\textsuperscript{245} In another respect, the relation of feelings and objects is more complex. I will explain that aspect below when I discuss symbols.

\textsuperscript{246} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 64.

\textsuperscript{247} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 64.

\textsuperscript{248} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 64.
While these sequences and groupings are intelligible, they can operate and exist together in a way purely logical operators cannot. For violence and tenderness can coexist, as can union and alienation.249

Feelings are related to their subject by providing “the mass and momentum and power” of conscious living.250 In other words, feelings provide our motivation, indicating and selecting what is important. Lonergan states, “It is the history of that process [the development or aberration of one’s feelings] that terminates in the person with a determinate orientation in life and with determinate affective capacities, dispositions and habits.”251 One can again see the influence of von Hildebrand and Scheler, brought within the horizon of transcendental method.

The deepest and most powerful of these orientations are the conversions, as I explained above. Especially with respect to religious conversion, the reasons of our hearts become transformed.252 As I explained in my discussion of faith, Lonergan reads the heart as “the subject in the fourth, existential, level of intentional consciousness,” and the heart’s reasons as feelings that are intentional responses to value.253 In faith, which is the horizon occasioned by religious conversion, the subject comes to be “in the dynamic state of being in love.”254 In this state, we come to have another kind of knowledge, a knowledge of transcendent value communicated to us through feelings, and it becomes an “actuated orientation toward the mystery of love

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249 Lonergan, Method, 65.

250 Lonergan, Method, 65.

251 Lonergan, Method, 65.

252 Again returning to Pascal’s reasons of the heart, which the reason does not know.

253 Lonergan, Method, 115.

254 Lonergan, Method, 115.
and awe.”255 Through the transformation of our conscious operations, occasioned by the transformation of the feelings that motivate them, we come to experience what Lonergan once called “a created communication of the divine nature, which is a created, proportionate, and remote principle whereby there are operations in creatures through which they attain God as he is in himself.”256 In this way, not just in our knowing but in our feeling, we come to express the image of God.257

The image of God is expressed by us corporately as well as individually. For the transformations of feeling can effect a community. Lonergan follows Scheler in identifying four aspects of common feeling: community of feeling, fellow feeling, psychic contagion, and emotional identification.258 Community of feeling and fellow feeling are similar, in that both are intentional responses that presuppose consciousness of an object.259 They differ in that in community of feeling, the subjects are relating directly to an object whereas in fellow feeling one subject is relating to the feelings of another subject concerning an object.260 Psychic contagion and emotional identification, by contrast, have a vital rather than an intentional basis. In psychic contagion, one shares an emotion with others without really understanding

255 Lonergan, Method, 115.
256 Lonergan, De Ente Supernaturali, 1.4.
258 Lonergan, Method, 57-58.
259 Lonergan, Method, 57.
260 To give an example, the spectators at a hockey match could experience a common joy at their team’s scoring the winning goal. That would be community of feeling. However, a friend of one of those spectators, who cares nothing about hockey, could also come to share in the joy over the winning goal, because he sees and identifies with the joy in his friend. That would be fellow feeling.
why; in emotional identification, there is some kind of lack of or retreat from personal differentiation to vital unity, and a sharing of feeling on that basis.\textsuperscript{261}

Therefore, even feelings that are necessarily personal, such as those that constitute religious conversion, can come to be present in and affect a group. Indeed, the entire set of relations that constitutes the human good is charged with feeling. Both individually and socially, over time, the human good of which we are a part comes to be shaped by the presence or absence, especially, of the conversions.\textsuperscript{262} For the dynamic orientation provided by the conversions directs us as we seek, or fail to seek, transcendent value.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Our intentional responses to value, or feelings, provide the motivation that makes religious and moral conversion effective. In his understanding of feelings, Lonergan draws on the work of Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand. These authors explain our perception of value, and response to value, which is a real aspect of the world and parallel to being. The world of value is disclosed to us through feelings. We can either be rightly ordered in the world of values, and feeling, or not.

Religious conversion is the ordering of our feelings within the ordered love that leads to God. Moral conversion is the ordering of our feelings in which we desire

\textsuperscript{261} To give another example, simply by being in the company of people who are cheerful, one could come to be in a good mood. That would be psychic contagion, because one may have no idea why the other people are cheerful. One simply receives an effect (or affect) from their state of emotion. Emotional identification presupposes either a primitive or a highly emotionally charged context in which one’s personal identity is either undeveloped or ceases to be of determining importance. It is an exceptionally strong form of psychic contagion. For example, primitive ecstatic worship experiences could lead to strongly shared feelings in which a group acts and feels as one; or, in mob-mentality, even a modern, developed, person can come to experience emotional identification as some aspects of individuality are surrendered to the group.

\textsuperscript{262} Note that Kenneth Melchin begins his chapter on “The Social Structure of Moral Knowledge” with an example of moral feeling. Kenneth Melchin, \textit{Living with Other People}, 36.
and choose the truly good for its own sake. Both of these re-orderings of the world of
our affections greatly affect on the different kinds of meaning we know, use and are.
In Dostoevsky’s great novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dimitri Karamazov has been falsely accused of his father’s murder. While jailed and awaiting trial, Dimitri has a dream of a poor woman and her hungry baby that affects him deeply. As he tells his brother, Alexei,

> Brother, in these past two months I’ve sensed a new man in me, a new man has arisen in me! He was shut up inside me, but if it weren’t for this thunderbolt, he would never have appeared. Frightening! … Even there, in the mines, underground, you can find a human heart in the convict and murderer standing next to you, and you can be close to him, because there, too, it’s possible to live, love, and suffer! You can revive and resurrect the frozen heart in this convict, you can look after him for years, and finally bring up from the light of the cave into the light a soul that is lofty now, a suffering consciousness, you can revive and angel, resurrect a hero!¹

While Dimitri has previously lived a dissolute life, caring little for those around him, he now resolves to turn. But what has changed? Did he not know there were starving children in Russia before this point? Rather, he has come to see them in a new way, and to know himself differently because he cares about them. Because of the transformation of his concern, he is able to look forward to the ordeal of imprisonment and hard labor, unjustly imposed, and see hope. The transformation of his feelings—the importance he knows in himself and his fellow beings—leads to the transformation of his whole world.

As Lonergan makes clear, the transformation of our feelings occasioned by the religious and moral conversions transforms every element of our lives. As I explained in chapter three, the human good and the universe we inhabit are rich with, and in

many ways constituted by, meaning. I will show how the transformation of our feelings changes who and what we are by discussing the five essential forms of meaning (intersubjective, aesthetic, symbolic, linguistic, and incarnate) Lonergan describes in *Method*.

A life lived coherently with religious conversion becomes a life of prayer. The most fundamental election, the choice, is God’s gift to us of an otherworldly love. The consolation that Ignatius describes as accompanying our being changed by the Creator in this way can become the support and motivation of the lesser, but significant, choices that we make. Although we are able to refuse, real liberty results from the self-determination that places each moral choice in right relation to the divine initiative.

The consolation of religious conversion can be experienced by many. In that like calls to like, the changed orientation resulting from religious conversion can come to shape or even found institutions. A good of order becomes more likely to be a true good of order (reflective of transcendent value) when affected by these institutions and by the transformed people in them. In this way, the work of human cooperation that results in a true good of order will have the character of common prayer. Just as our human friendships perfect the operation of the institutions we are part of, so also the whole structure and operation of the human good is elevated when we together express friendship with God.

Religious conversion, therefore, sublates moral conversion. When they occur in the same consciousness, religious conversion provides the apprehension of true value that directs and motivates our right moral operation. The human good is fulfilled by coming to be part of the life of God. In the operations of our
consciousness, we begin to experience the communication of divine life when we enter the horizon of faith.

More than that, however, I will argue that religious conversion is *de facto* necessary for moral conversion. While some passages in Lonergan indicate that religious, moral and intellectual conversion can exist independently, I will argue that these passages are best understood as describing theoretical possibilities or limit cases. For us fallen ones, it is more coherent with the overall message of Lonergan’s writings, and with many specific passages, to expect that achieving the foundation for moral rectitude will not occur without the motivating grace of God.

The Transformation of Meaning

As I argued in my second and third chapters, Lonergan proposes a rich and interlocking set of meanings that constitute human beings and the human good. This chapter has as its goal further to explain the relation of religious and moral conversion. But the rightness of human being and human cooperation is the burden of our moral task. And as I have explained above, Lonergan sees our moral doing as motivated and shaped by our moral feeling; our moral feeling, likewise, is itself motivated and shaped by the presence or absence of the gift of God’s love. Therefore, the way each of the kinds of meaning that constitute us are affected by these feelings provides a fertile way to explore what it means that religious conversion transforms us, both in and of itself and in its motivating the rectitude of our moral feelings.

In the chapter in *Method* on “Meaning,” Lonergan examines five interlocking kinds of meaning: intersubjective, artistic, symbolic, linguistic, and incarnate. I will now examine each of them, looking for the ways feeling affects each one. At the end of the examination, I hope that the reader will have a better idea of the effect of
feelings on the meanings that constitute us, and thereby the way the conversions make a difference in the constitution of the human good.

Intersubjectivity and Intersubjective Meaning

Intersubjective meaning is the first kind of meaning Lonergan explores.2 He considers it to be principal, for it precedes the formation of individual identities.3 There is a spontaneous way that humans relate together, in offering mutual aid and in feeling, that has precedence over our personal and private selves. Even through something as simple and spontaneous as a smile, we share meanings and fellowship with each other.

Feeling affects and even constitutes intersubjectivity through the four modes of interpersonal feeling Scheler describes. In community of feeling, fellow feeling, psychic contagion and emotional identification, we share not just what we feel but who we are. Religious conversion and moral conversion affect intersubjectivity in that the feelings shared, and therefore the intersubjective ground of our being, can be either righteous or not. Ressentiment can come to characterize a people or group, but so can moral rectitude and, to an extent, self-sacrificing love.

Intersubjective meaning undergirds two especially transcendent realities or experiences, according to two interpreters of Lonergan. According to Michael Stebbins, it is the intersubjective presence to us of Christ in the Eucharist that transforms both this act of worship and who we are.4 William Johnston, additionally,

2 Lonergan, Method, 57-61.

3 Lonergan, Method, 57.

4 J. Michael Stebbins, “The Eucharistic Presence of Christ: Mystery and Meaning,” Worship, 64 (1990): 225-236. Stebbins’ article also enlightens the transformation of the Eucharist from symbol to sacrament, as I will mention in the section on symbolic meaning.
points to the unitive being with God that informs and transforms the life of the
genuine mystic, occasioned by the knowledge born of religious love. In both of these
examples, the grace of God enters one’s life not as an outside, heteronomous force but
as an insight into the unity of one’s life with God.

Artistic Meaning

After his discussion of intersubjective meaning, Lonergan moves to artistic
meaning. He indicates, both at the start of that section and in a footnote at its
conclusion, his debt to Susanne Langer. Lonergan had referred to Langer’s art
theory in Insight, and here again in Method draws on her work, Feeling and Form.

Lonergan’s explanation of artistic meaning is elliptical, and it is helpful to
look at the relevant portions of Langer, both to see what the original meanings of the
terms Lonergan uses were and to see how he transposes them into the horizon of
transcendental method. Discussing Langer’s whole theory of art is more than I need
do in this context, but I will discuss the aspects of her work that deal especially with
feelings and that help one understand the role of feelings that Lonergan explains as
part of artistic meaning. In that Lonergan specifies two chapters of Feeling and Form
as especially useful in Insight, I will pay special attention to them, in addition to the
introductory matter that helps one make sense of Langer’s work.

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6 Lonergan, Method, 61-64.
7 Lonergan, Method, 61 and 64n2.
8 Lonergan, Insight, 208 and 567; Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from "Philosophy in a New Key" (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953).
9 For a thorough treatment of Lonergan’s use of Langer, including a helpful explanation of
Langer’s thought, see Richard M. Liddy, “What Bernard Lonergan Learned from Susanne Langer,” in
Frederick Lawrence, ed., The Lonergan Workshop, vol. 11 (Missoula, MT: Scholar’s Press, 1995), 53-
Susanne Langer, in the introduction to *Feeling and Form*, specifies the purpose of her work this way:

What *Feeling and Form* does undertake to do, is to specify the meanings of the words: expression, creation, symbol, import, intuition, vitality, and organic form, in such a way that we may understand, in terms of them, the nature of art and its relation to feeling, the relative autonomy of the several arts and fundamental unity in “Art” itself, the functions of subject matter and medium, the epistemological problems of artistic “communication” and “truth.”

Her ambitious undertaking thus desires to provide a critical insight that will ground the presently-jumbled field of aesthetics systematically.

Langer’s approach obviously draws on a rich philosophical heritage, yet her emphasis is to proceed empirically. Aesthetics is a notoriously difficult field to define. Langer’s procedure begins with what she considers a (or the) central question: “What is artistic creation?” By examining artistic creation as it is happening and has happened in the various arts, Langer hopes to arrive at an answer that will illuminate the meaning of such terms as taste, emotion, form, representation, immediacy (that somehow includes intuition), and illusion. Her method will examine present and past works of artistic creation and also listen to various artists to hear what they consider important, and to how they understand their creative exercise.

At the heart of artistic creativity, Langer finds what she calls “significant form.” Significant form is an articulate expression of feeling that reflects something

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13 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 30. She seems to take her definition of “form” from the early Wittgenstein. See Liddy, “What Lonergan Learned from Langer.” Part of Langer’s point is that form is known in the distinct pattern of the artistic work, and this pattern consists of sets of relations that are intrinsic to the work. A work of art may refer to an external meaning (for example, a portrait refers to
verbally ineffable.14 “The making of this expressive form is the creative process that
enlists man’s utmost technical skill in the service of his utmost conceptual power,
imagination.”15 Art, therefore, creates forms (articulate expressions, patterns) that
symbolize feeling.16

In making her case, Langer goes on carefully to examine the various arts.
Lonergan refers in *Insight* to two of these chapters: on music and poetry. Both prove
helpful to understand how Lonergan later treated artistic meaning and aesthetics.

With respect to music, Langer begins with envisioning the composer at the
start of a musical composition. What she is looking for, Langer avers, is the
controlling form, the central theme of the composition as it will exist in her mind.17
Once that form is found, if she is competently trained in her discipline, the composer
will see various possibilities for expressing that form in a work of music.18

The essential form of music, as Langer analyzes it, is constructing the illusion
of time, in a way making time audible.19 Within the virtual time, thus created, the

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16 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 40. By “symbol,” Langer means “any device whereby we are
enabled to make an abstraction.” Langer, *Feeling and Form*, x.
17 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 121-122.
18 Langer does not give this example, but one might profitably think of Beethoven’s seizing
upon the musical progression that opens his *Fifth Symphony*, and constructing the various layers of the
symphony from that initial idea.
19 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 125. The plastic arts, such as painting, create virtual space.
central form of the composition provides the hinge on which its rhythm and melody turn:

The matrix, in music the fundamental movement of melody or harmonic progression, which establishes the greatest rhythm of the piece and dictates its scope, is born of the composer’s thought and feeling, but as soon as he recognizes it as an individual symbol and sets forth its outline it becomes the expression of an impersonal Idea, and opens, to him and to others, a deep mine of musical resource.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus the commanding form of the piece guides the artist’s judgment; it is no longer an element of feeling merely personal to the artist and therefore private, but it is an objective thing that guides the artist’s judgment. It is an Idea, known in “a click,” a sudden grasp, that conveys some kind of insight having to do with emotions.\textsuperscript{21}

In this way, music conducts its two great offices. It organizes our conception of feeling, and it gives us an insight into the life of feeling.\textsuperscript{22} The commanding form directs both of these offices, for it contains its basic rhythm, the pattern which is simultaneously the source of the composition’s unity and feeling.\textsuperscript{23}

Although the commanding form begins as an element or expression of the composer’s feeling, once grasped as a commanding form it has an objective character.\textsuperscript{24} In fact, the composer and subsequent musicians can feel a moral obligation to it. A great commanding form contains something that \textit{should} be said, played, felt. It can even be a note of moral progress within a composer or musician as to whether she feels it, serves it.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{20} Langer, \textit{Feeling and Form}, 122-123.

\textsuperscript{21} Langer, \textit{Feeling and Form}, 123.

\textsuperscript{22} Langer, \textit{Feeling and Form}, 126.

\textsuperscript{23} Langer, \textit{Feeling and Form}, 129.

\textsuperscript{24} Langer, \textit{Feeling and Form}, 131.

\textsuperscript{25} Langer, \textit{Feeling and Form}, 131. Langer notes Beethoven’s sentiments in this regard.
Whereas Langer analyzes music as the creation of virtual time, she regards poetry as the image of human life. Poetry puts into words the human imagination. In a way quite different from discourse, poetry expresses our imaginative powers and reveals their distinctive “logic.” In this chapter, “Life and Its Image,” Langer draws on three contemporaneous but quite different thinkers to explain this logic of the heart: Ernst Cassirer, Owen Barfield, and Sigmund Freud.

From Cassirer’s great work on the philosophy of symbolic forms, Langer notes that there is in primitive “logic” the ability of language at once to have multiple meanings and to speak in terms of representative figures. Primitive “logic” builds up meanings through pleonasm, reinforcement. Here, one association does not cancel out or replace another but builds or sits on top of it.

Langer also explains Barfield’s central point as almost a paraphrase of Cassirer. Barfield saw a living unity to the original forms of language, in which the concrete meaning of a term contains multiple meanings. Whereas logical discourse has analyzed abstract versus concrete, particular versus general, or objective versus subjective, several or all of these existed all at once, originally.

Langer devotes the greatest space in this chapter, however, to Freud’s interpretation of dreams. Non-discursive art (such as poetry) has the role of articulating knowledge, a dynamic of feeling, that is not amenable to be rendered

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26 Langer, Feeling and Form, 236.

27 “Logic” is here sometimes used in quotation marks because the sets of relations Langer is describing are impossible according to logic — there is the possibility of contradiction, middle terms are not always excluded, negation is not really negative, etc. However, there is some intelligible way that one can come to understand the laws of this realm of meaning, that is analogous to the way logic defines sets of intellectual relations.

28 Langer, Feeling and Form, 237.

29 Langer, Feeling and Form, 238-239. Langer does not believe Barfield depended on Cassirer or was influenced by him, but that their insights are remarkably close to each other.
Langer holds that the laws of combination that govern aesthetic forms—that is, the fundamental laws of imagination—were first systematically studied by Freud.

Langer concentrates on two of Freud’s canons of symbolization: “overdetermination” and “condensation.” Overdetermination refers to the ability of a symbol to have multiple meanings, which can be contradictory. Freud referred to this as the symbol’s ambiguity. Condensation refers to a fusion among the forms themselves, by intersection, contraction, elision, or suppression, that heightens the emotional quality of the image. Condensation makes one aware of the complexities of feeling.

In tapping into these imaginative dynamics, the poet’s task is to create through the poem a virtual experience of life. For example, a poet could draw on the similarity of opposing emotions (love and hate, joy and sorrow), for in this poetic “logic,” there is no negation, but only contrast; what is negated is thereby brought to mind, created. Every successful poem will create a semblance of life, an illusion of experience, which operates according to the “logic” of our imagination. Langer states, “To create the poetic primary illusion, hold the reader to it, and develop the image of reality so it has emotional significance above the suggested emotions in it, is

34 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 243-244.
36 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 244-245.
37 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 245.
the purpose of every word a poet writes.”38 The poem as a whole is a symbol, distinct from the individual symbols that constitute it, speaking according to the laws of imagination, communicating insight to feeling.

Materials from outside the poem (historic personages or events, material objects described, even the “I” of the poet’s own self) may be used in the poem, but their proper significance must be internal to the poem, to the imagination and feeling the poem intends.39 Langer argues,

Every good work of art has, I think, something that may be said to come from the world, and that bespeaks the artist’s own feeling about life. This accords with the intellectual and, indeed, biological importance of art: we are driven to the symbolization and articulation of feeling when we must understand it to keep ourselves oriented in society and nature. So the first emotional phenomena a person wants to formulate are his own disconcerted passions. … So reality quite normally furnishes the images; but they are forms to be used by an excited imagination. … And now begins the work of composition, the struggle for complete expressiveness, for that understanding of the form which finally makes sense out of the emotional chaos.40

Just as the central form of a musical composition becomes an objective reality, something distinct from the composer who generated it, so also the feeling that a poem puts into words must become detached from the poet. It finds its meaning and purpose publicly, as something available to communicate and order emotion and importance.

As I noted in my first chapter, Lonergan does not appropriate any of the authors he draws from uncritically. Their germane insights, the genuine achievements of human spirit, are transposed to within the horizon of transcendental method. This is certainly true of his appropriation of Langer. As Richard Liddy explains, Langer

38 Langer, Feeling and Form, 245.
39 Langer, Feeling and Form, 246.
40 Langer, Feeling and Form, 253.
was a materialist and ended up reducing all of human thought to feeling, then reducing all of feeling to biological processes.\textsuperscript{41} Neither did she see feelings as intentional responses; hence her insistence that the proper importance of the poem lives only in the world of the poem. Informed by Scheler and von Hildebrand, Lonergan’s grasp of feeling is much richer, as are his metaphysics, epistemology, and cognitional theory. Nevertheless, he did learn from Langer and consistently recommended \textit{Feeling and Form} as a work with much to say about aesthetics.\textsuperscript{42}

Lonergan opens his discussion of artistic meaning in \textit{Method} with the patterns that are present in art and make it perceivable and meaningful to us. He states that in Langer, “art is defined as the objectification of a purely experiential pattern.”\textsuperscript{43} As commentators have pointed out, Langer does not give this definition.\textsuperscript{44} However, I think Lonergan here transposes Langer’s thought on significant form as defining a work of art.

The pattern functions purely as art to the extent that it excludes didactic, scientific, theoretical, or other non-artistic forms of meaning.\textsuperscript{45} The pure artistic pattern consists of the experiences given by the artwork as perceived as art. One could calculate the displacement of Michelangelo’s \textit{David}, or lecture on the changing attitudes toward Napoleon manifest in Beethoven’s symphonies, but one would not be in that moment interacting with these works as art.

\textsuperscript{41} Liddy, “What Lonergan Learned from Langer.”

\textsuperscript{42} Liddy, “What Lonergan Learned from Langer.”

\textsuperscript{43} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 61.


\textsuperscript{45} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 61-62.
The experiential patterns given us in art are rich with meaning. As Lonergan says,

To them accrue their retinue of associations, affects, emotions, incipient tendencies. Out of them may rise a lesson, but into them a lesson may not be intruded in the manner of didacticism, moralism, or social realism. To them also accrues the experiencing subject with his capacity for wonder, for awe and fascination, with his openness to adventure, daring, greatness, goodness, majesty.46

The experiential patterns of art engage the subject at a basic, elemental level, and they communicate feeling.47

As we engage the art form, we are joined with its world. In a way, there is a withdrawal from the rational and responsible world of discursive questions and answers.48 In this withdrawal, the subject “has become just himself: emergent, ecstatic, originating freedom.”49 The withdrawal is assuredly for the sake of a return; for by inviting us to withdraw from the practical, everyday, world, the work of art helps us to explore a “richer world” of expanded possibilities.50

Lonergan’s treatment of art and aesthetic meaning in Method covers about three pages. A much fuller account, also influenced by Langer, is to be found in the 1959 lectures published as Topics in Education.51 While these lectures took place before Lonergan had made the full, monumental shift to transcendental method, I think that his discussion there of aesthetics can help inform the abbreviated discussion

46 Lonergan, Method, 62.
48 Lonergan, Method, 63.
49 Lonergan, Method, 63.
50 Lonergan, Method, 64.
51 See Liddy, “What Lonergan Learned from Langer.”
in *Method*. While I do not need to examine his full treatment of aesthetics, I will draw some points from there that I believe help explain Lonergan’s discussion in *Method* and also clarify how religious conversion calls us to a better, more ethical, life.

As explained in *Topics in Education*, I argue that aesthetic experience is a transforming response of the human person to value. Lonergan there introduces value as a distinct component of the human good, alongside the particular good and the good of order. Value can be known in three ways: aesthetic, ethical and religious. Aesthetic value “enables people to apprehend the human good on its profoundest level or, on the contrary, to sense something wrong, in a very immediate fashion …“ We know aesthetic value when we realize that a true good, particularly a true good of order, is present in or as something sensibly presented to us.

The “profound” and “immediate” nature of our apprehension of aesthetic value is clarified by Lonergan’s discussion of art. Particularly, that in art, concrete

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52 Lonergan had also made the move to consider the existential horizon of the subject and begun to highlight the importance of conversion. See Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 88-91, 96, 161. Additionally, Lonergan refers to Max Scheler three times (58, 121, and 165).

53 Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 36-38. Value, here, indicates what Lonergan would call in the chart in *Method*, “transcendent value.” It has to do with the goodness of the overall good of order one considers or is a part of.

54 Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 37. Note that the apprehension of aesthetic value is immediate, not reflective. Therefore, it cannot be a proper operation of the third phase of intentional consciousness (judgment). Perhaps one can see Scheler’s influence here.

55 Lonergan specifically says that in aesthetic value, we realize “the intelligible in the sensible.” Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 37. He goes on to speak of the transparency of a good of order shining through a society, or a happy home or community. The opposite, of course, is also the case. One may realize a deep wrongness when presented with a lack of intelligibility in the sensible. Here, I think a lack of intelligibility is best understood as the presence of the something objectively absurd (see my discussion of sin in chapter five). When Lonergan discusses the opposite of aesthetic value, “ugliness,” he explains that ugliness can result either from the good of order’s being too complex to be transparent, or from a strict privation in the good of order. Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 44-46. Concerning value, it seems to me that Lonergan may be somewhere between his presentation of ethics in *Insight* as a prolongation of metaphysics and the distinct transcendental notion of value explained in *Method*. As I mentioned above, Lonergan does refer repeatedly to Max Scheler in *Topics of Education*, but that does not indicate that Lonergan had fully assimilated Scheler’s (let alone von Hildebrand’s) notions of value and value perception.
value is concretely apprehended. As I explained in chapter three, “concrete” is opposed to “abstract,” indicating something considered not from some particular point of view but in its entirety and actuality, from every point of view. 56 Art, according to *Topics in Education*, is an apprehension of concrete living. 57 The apprehension of art is also concrete, in that it does not involve the work of intellectually patterned consciousness (such as is present in mathematics, science and philosophy). 58 As Lonergan says, the intellectually differentiated modes of consciousness are a withdrawal from “total activity, total actuation” of consciousness for the sake of a return:

What one returns to is the concrete functioning of the whole. In that concrete functioning there is an organic interrelation and interdependence of the parts of the subject with respect to the whole, and of the individual subject with respect to the historically changing group. Art mirrors that organic functioning of sense and feeling, of intellect not as abstract formulation but as concrete insight, judgment that is not just judgment, but that is moving into decision, free choice, responsible action. 59

In art, the person responds to the luminosity of the value of our world. This aesthetic response is a holistic response to concrete value.

Art thereby opens up to us “elemental meaning.” 60 In an Aristotelian theory of knowledge and sensation, there is an identity between the knowing intellect and the known intelligibility in the act of knowing, an identity between the senses and that

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56 See Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 208-211.

57 Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 211. For example, Lonergan appropriates Langer’s explanation of the plastic arts creating virtual space, music as creating virtual time, and drama giving us the image of destiny. Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 223, 227 and 231.


which is sensed in sensation.\textsuperscript{61} Elemental meaning has to do with the state of identity between the knower and the known, the one sensing and what is sensed, prior to reflection.\textsuperscript{62}

The unification involved in elemental meaning is a transformation of one’s world.\textsuperscript{63} “To put it another way, it is an opening of the horizon.”\textsuperscript{64} In art, one encounters something that is other, but that can profoundly change the self. The value embodied in art, when deeply encountered, leads to changes, transformations, on the side of the subject.\textsuperscript{65} To quote Lonergan again,

The subject in act is the object in act on the level of elemental meaning. The subject is liberated from being a replaceable part adjusted to and integrated in a ready-made world. He is liberated from being a responsible enquirer in search of exact knowledge of some aspect of the universe. He is just himself—subject in act, emergent, ecstatic, standing out. He is his own originating freedom.\textsuperscript{66}

The experience of art, when profound, can open one’s horizon to something new, and to becoming something new. This opening is a liberation—not to irrationality, for that would be to embrace absurdity, the ugliness of privation—of the self as a source of meaning, the self as meaningful.

\textsuperscript{61} Thus, the intelligibility grasped by the intelligence of the knower when knowing a flower, for example, would be the same as the intelligibility inherent in the flower, if the knowing is happening correctly. That is, the intelligence of the knower may take on a form that is identical to the substantial form of the flower being known. Similarly, the image grasped by the senses has an identity with the sensible quality presented by the flower, if the sensation is happening correctly. Lonergan makes it clear that this is only the first stage of knowledge; reflection must follow in order to have real knowledge.

\textsuperscript{62} Lonergan equates this initial state with the “ontic” in Heidegger. Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 216.

\textsuperscript{63} Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 216.

\textsuperscript{64} Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 216.

\textsuperscript{65} Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 217.

\textsuperscript{66} Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}, 217.
Elemental meaning is not only encountered in works of art but describes the substance of our lives. “There is an artistic element in all consciousness, in all living.” As Lonergan explains in *Insight* concerning the dramatic pattern of experience, “Not only, then, is man capable of aesthetic liberation and artistic creativity, but his first work of art is his own living.” This artistry is ourselves and our lives in the presence of others, for elemental meaning is pre-reflective, the fruit of our concrete being, and that being is social. And the patterns of living we enact are emotionally and conatively charged. Our lives, in a way, are our works of art. We become present to ourselves, become ourselves, in our performance.

Portions of this section on art, including the section on elemental meaning, appear either verbatim or near-verbatim in the section on art in *Method*. In *Method*, though, they have been transposed into a fully-developed horizon of transcendental method. Value and feeling, and the operations of consciousness, have taken on richer, wider, or more specific meanings. I think it possible, though, that the explanation of art and elemental meaning in *Topics in Education* can help us understand aspects of the transformation of the person by religious conversion, as explained in *Method*.

How exactly does the apprehension of transcendent value, on the fourth level of intentional consciousness, work? Our apprehension of being happens on the first three levels of intentional consciousness, and being is known, in the strict sense, in

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69 Lonergan, *Insight*, 211.


71 See Crowe, *Developing the Lonergan Legacy*, 234-238, for the way the dramatic, and the dramatic pattern of experience, play a role in Lonergan’s notion of mutual self-mediation, including the role of feelings. See also Glen Hughes, “The Drama of Living, and Lonergan’s Retrieval of Transcendence,” in *The Lonergan Workshop*, ed. by Frederick Lawrence, vol. 10 (Missoula Montana: Scholars Press, 1994).
judgment (the culmination of level three). Why is transcendent value apprehended on the fourth? And in what way is it apprehended?

Perhaps the apprehension of transcendent value is analogous to the apprehension of aesthetic value in a great work of art. A great work of art communicates value through feelings, in the knowing of its significant form. In religious conversion, the Holy Spirit communicates value—both God’s self as transcendent value and the subsequent trans-valuing of all other values—through feelings, in the apprehension of transcendent value.

The apprehension of value when encountering a great work of art is holistic; not just our senses or our understanding but we are moved. We encounter the work of art not as responsible inquirers, but as actual, concrete, real. In the language of *Topics in Education*, a great work of art leads us to concrete insight, to “judgment that is not just judgment, but that is moving into decision, free choice, responsible action.” So also religious conversion effects for us real self-transcendence; by operative grace we become those who are in love with God. One of Lonergan’s great points in interiority analysis is that each of the four phases of conscious intentionality has its own priority. It is appropriate that the phase of conscious operation in which this apprehension of transcendent value is received is the only phase capable of real (not merely intellectual or cognitive) self-transcendence.

The apprehension of value in encountering a great work of art is transformative and unitive. Our horizons are changed, and we receive a kind of identity with the work of art while we are affected by it. So also, to a much higher degree, with religious conversion. For love is unitive, and it is God’s own love that floods our hearts. Religious conversion makes possible the horizon of faith. In faith,

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to use again Lonergan’s older language, we receive “a created communication of the
divine nature,” the unitive gift of God’s self, present in our conscious operations.  

The apprehension of value in encountering a great work of art is elemental,
and can change the substance of our lives. So much more so with religious
conversion. By cooperating with God’s grace, that is, coming by grace to live out the
orientation to transcendent value, we change the tenor of our life as work of art.  

We are drawn into the drama of those who are being saved.

Lonergan does not spend much time in Method speaking about beauty. One
can wonder if this transcendental, present in medieval theology, has been forgotten.
But perhaps beauty is an aspect of the transcendental notion of value, value as we
respond to it with our whole selves, as dramatic beings.

Augustine, in his Confessions, prays, “Too late have I loved you, O Beauty so
ancient and so new, too late have I loved you! For you were within me, while I was
outside…. “ Perhaps here, again, one may see the Augustinian character of
Lonergan’s later theology. In religious conversion, we respond to that Beauty as
those whose whole lives have been transformed. We have found ourselves by losing
ourselves to this value, this beauty that draws us beyond the horizon of this world.

73 Lonergan, De Ente Supernaturali, 1.4.

74 Lonergan does differentiate between the dramatic and the aesthetic pattern of experience. However, to the extent that the dramatic pattern of experience extends beyond our lives in their average-everydayness, and enters into a creation of a life as a work of art, I argue that the insights gleaned from the aesthetic pattern of experience are appropriate for understanding the dramatic pattern in which we perform our lives.


I offer these reflections on aesthetic meaning as a possibly relevant hypothesis that may help explain the action of religious conversion. Lonergan does not specify that religious conversion operates just this way. However, I think that the dynamics present in encountering meaning in art may help illuminate the way God changes our hearts in religious conversion.

Symbolic Meaning

Lonergan’s understanding of symbolic meaning draws on a number of sources, among them literary, psychological, religious, anthropological, and aesthetic scholars. My purpose here is not to construct a genealogy explaining Lonergan’s notion of symbols but to present the way he understood that symbols communicate both meaning and feeling. Thereby, I hope better to explain the change that religious conversion makes in our conscious operations.

According to Lonergan, “A symbol is an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.” Although the most obvious symbols are probably visual, our imaginations deal with our other senses, as well. Even leaving aside symbols that serve linguistic meaning (to be discussed below), one could consider the scent of the ocean for a sailor, or a romantic couple’s hearing “their song.”


78 Lonergan, Method, 64.
“It is through symbols that mind and body, heart and mind, heart and body communicate.”79 In this intricate relationship, feelings reveal objects to us, and objects awaken our feelings. Our intentional responses to value are thereby shaped by and directed by symbols in their meaning to us.

Symbols can evoke different feelings in different subjects, or even in the same subject when considered over time.80 Likewise, the same feelings do not necessarily evoke the same symbols, either in different people or in one subject over time. For example, the feelings evoked by the raising of a national flag vary greatly according to who is viewing it; and feelings of comfort, security, and rest do not make everyone think of “home.” These differences can be partially accounted for by differences in age, sex, education, state of life, temperament and existential concern.81 However, more fundamentally, the relation of symbols to our feelings reflects our affective development, which can either become richer and stronger or suffer aberrations.82 Lonergan says, “It is the history of that process [the development or aberration of one’s feelings] that terminates in the person with a determinate orientation in life and with determinate affective capacities, dispositions, and habits.”83 Whereas the former set of differences indicate perspectival differences in horizon, affective development or aberration indicate genetic or dialectical differences in horizon.84

As one undergoes significant affective growth or regression, one’s symbolic world will necessarily change. In a genetic relation the change will be understandable

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79 Lonergan, Method, 67.
80 Lonergan, Method, 65.
81 Lonergan, Method, 65.
82 Lonergan, Method, 65.
83 Lonergan, Method, 65, explanatory note in brackets added.
84 See my discussion in chapter one on differences in horizon.
according to the regular principles of personal growth and development. For example, considering the same subject at both five and twenty-five years of age, “the dark” could awaken feelings of fear in the child yet occasion feelings of safety and concealment in the adult. Such a change would not surprise a developmental psychologist. However, when feelings related to symbols do not change—should the twenty-five year-old still be afraid of the dark—a block in affective development is probably indicated.85

Changes in the feelings that symbols awaken, and the feelings awakened by certain symbols, can also indicate a dialectic difference in horizon. While psychological continuity is not abandoned, a vertical exercise of freedom has taken one into a new horizon. The new feelings identify, accompany, and to an extent constitute one’s determinate orientation in life. For example, for a thief now-morally-converted former, an unlocked window might evoke feelings of regret for his past, or of concern for the careless homeowner, instead of the avaricious joy formerly felt. This is not simply a developmental change, or a result of some new lesson learned, but a new way of thinking, acting, feeling, and being.

Lonergan considered that symbols obey the laws of image and feeling, not those of logic.86 His explanation of the laws of feeling are reminiscent of Langer’s use of Cassirer, Barfield, and Freud concerning the “logic” of symbolic form in poetry. “The symbol, then, has the power of recognizing and expressing what logical discourse abhors: the existence of internal tensions, incompatibilities, conflicts,
struggles, destructions. 

Symbols can be polyvalent, then, and hold together meanings that are logically incompatible.

Symbols do not thereby destroy logic but complement and enrich it. 

Our conscious operations still flow intelligibly from attending to understanding to judging to deciding. However, symbols can occasion affective insights, or be evoked by them; and affective insights are proper or improper conditions of all our conscious operations. This world contains both excesses and privations of meaning, and so do we ourselves, due either to sin or to the image of God in us. 

Symbols help us relate to the world and to ourselves, either when we are logically undeveloped in our thought processes, or when the excess or privation of meaning exceeds the capacity of human logic. Or, if we are affectively undeveloped or suffering an aberration of our affections, this will be manifest in the content of our symbolic world.

A symbol has relevance both to the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning. Explaining a symbol always means going beyond it. 

The meaning in the symbol is elemental, but the explanation will be linguistic. The values they represent are known to us immediately; in explaining them, we express that meaning in the world mediated by meaning. Because of the polyvalent nature of symbols, and because of the excesses or deprivations of rationality they may express, the linguistic meanings that explain them will likely be multiple and constitute more of a range of meanings than an exact definition. 

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89 See Lawrence, “The Hermeneutic Revolution,” 334-335, for different aspects of the excess of meaning present to us.


explaining the meanings of symbols, Lonergan begins the catalogue of authors I alluded to at the beginning of this section.

The transformation of symbols is one of the powerful ways the inner word of religious conversion interacts with the outer word of one’s religious or philosophical tradition. As Frederick Lawrence says,

None the less, two aspects of human being are made plain in the Jewish and Christian revelations of our mysterious ‘one thing needful’: first, human life has the structure of both a conversation and a story; second, God has chosen to enter into the human story, to make human beings sharers in the divine conversation.92

Speaking of the Christian experience, religious conversion grounds our participation in the life of the Trinity, an infinite conversation of wisdom and love. Thereby, the story and conversation that we are become transformed.

While I will speak more of this transformation under linguistic and incarnate meaning, the Gospel story is rich with symbols (as are those of the other major world religions); symbolically rich, as well, is our mode of participating in it.93 Recall the insistence of Rudolph Otto and Paul Tillich that religious experience gives significance and meaning to the outer forms of religious communication. Religious conversion, in dialogue with the outer word of grace, changes who we are and thereby changes our symbolic world.

I will offer three examples. First, consider the feelings evoked for most Roman citizens of the first century by a cross. One would expect revulsion, disgust, fear, perhaps a strange attraction, or dread. Consider, then, the presentation of Jesus’ crucifixion in John 19. Jesus’ word from the cross, “It is finished (tetelestai),” is a cry

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of victory. The symbolic world of the author of the Fourth Gospel has been
transformed within the horizon of faith.

Second, consider the practice of Christian worship in a Roman Catholic
liturgy. As Margaret Mary Kelleher says, “An assembly engaged in the performance
of liturgy acts as a collective subject and in its ritual praxis symbolically mediates a
public horizon.”94 The experience of this liturgy by someone who has been
transformed by religious conversion differs greatly from the experience of someone
who has not. The words, movements, images, sounds, smells and dramatic
enactments presented to each are the same, but the value perceived in them, the
feelings evoked by them, differ for the religiously converted and unconverted
subjects. The converted subject can be a member of the liturgical community in a
way that the unconverted subject can not.95

Third, consider the possible transformation of the meaning and feelings
associated with “fatherhood,” in a person whose father has been absent. Religious
conversion does not make the wounds of the past disappear, and it certainly does not
trivialize them; yet within the horizon of faith both healing and forgiveness are
possible. One may find that, despite what one may experience from human fathers,
both the inner and outer words of God’s grace speak of a good and present Father we
may know, compared to whom even the best of our human fathers are evil.96

In all of these instances, the religiously converted subject’s symbolic world
has changed. The dialectical difference in horizon occasioned by religious conversion

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95 For the transformation of significance in symbols that are more than mere symbols

96 The same healing could, of course, take place relative to the motherhood of God.
transform who the subject is, both individually and intersubjectively. Our stories become seen as part of the history of God on this earth, and our conversation thereby begins to resonate with the divine conversation. As a consequence, the lives we live are transformed because the meanings we interact with (and the meaning that we are) have changed.

Healing the Bias of the Unconscious Motivations

In the chapter on the conversions, I spoke of the way in which moral conversion combats and heals individual, group, and general bias. Lonergan specifically and repeatedly names these three biases as redressed by moral conversion. One may ask, what of dramatic bias, brought into the horizon of Method as the bias of the unconscious motivations?

To my knowledge, Lonergan does not specify how this bias is redressed. However, in that the work of God elevating and healing the human subject involves the whole human person, one may expect that somehow, the bias of the unconscious motivations may be healed. By recalling exactly what this bias entails, taken together with the transformation of feeling brought about by religious conversion, I propose to offer a tentative answer to this question.

Dramatic bias was brought into the horizon of Method as the notion of radical sin. We experience it as moral impotence, in which we love the darkness and not the light, and tend toward unintelligibility, not intelligibility. In this disordering of our

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97 One may again see a connection with Augustine’s Confessions, at a personal level, and The City of God, at a corporate level. Augustine saw his conversion as allowing him, for the first time, to know his true self; and the autobiography he wrote was his life remembered in God. The story of the human race, from Adam to the New Jerusalem, likewise is told in The City of God. Those whom grace transforms find their being and meaning as pilgrims toward that Eternal City.
feelings, the “unconscious” feelings inhabit the twilight of our consciousness, for they are part of our consciousness but we have not objectified them (and may never do so).

It does not seem to me that the bias of the unconscious motivations is capable of being redressed by any one of the conversions individually. Moreover, even the three conversions taken together would not guarantee the healing of this bias. Nevertheless, I think that in the action of the three conversions, understood in their relation to feeling, one probably finds conditions which make the amelioration of this bias probable.

Most fundamentally, religious conversion would directly affect this bias in the healing and elevation of our feelings. We must be removed from the dynamic of ressentiment and be placed in the ordo amoris. This re-ordering of our affective world has great consequences for the meanings that constitute us. Religious conversion works on this bias by changing us interpersonally, as we become one with the community of the light, no longer loving the darkness. Religious conversion would also reorder us aesthetically, as we become part of the drama of salvation and experience the feelings concomitant with that. It also involves a reshaping of our symbolic world, as the inner ground of the symbols we encounter changes. Our twilight motivations do not fully change until we no longer love the symbols of the darkness. While I believe the primary work of reversal involves these forms of meaning, since they reach down most completely to the twilight of our consciousness, the work of religious conversion in healing the bias of the unconscious motivation also affects linguistic and incarnate meaning. The meanings that we are and the meanings we choose to understand are affected by our unconscious motivations. In having the twilight of our consciousness set straight, the function of feeling in these later kinds of meaning also becomes more correctly ordered.
However, taking full cognizance of one’s feelings, however abominable, is neither a pleasant nor an easy task.\textsuperscript{98} To embark on this work requires moral fiber and conviction. A commitment to what is right, just because it is right, would also be needed to sustain the transformation, and it will not be accomplished in a day. Implicitly, at least, moral conversion is then clearly required to motivate this significant work of self-appropriation.

Regarding the role of intellectual conversion, to make this self-appropriation of who we are, we will to some extent have to assert ourselves (to have confidence in, to take possession of ourselves) as knowers, because we have, in a difficult and non-self-evident way, to become knowers of ourselves. Implicitly, again, intellectual conversion will be required to make the role and ability of the self in self-appropriation real.

Linguistic Meaning

Linguistic meaning is the embodiment of meaning in language, “a set of conventional signs.”\textsuperscript{99} Linguistic meaning has a near-infinite potential for variation, for these signs can be multiplied indefinitely. In linguistic meaning, therefore, meaning finds its greatest liberation.\textsuperscript{100}

The world of linguistic meaning extends far beyond the role of feelings. However, feelings still play a vital role, a role that varies according to which type of linguistic genus is involved. Even the most conventional of signs are still symbols, by definition, and retain at least the potential for communicating feelings.

\textsuperscript{98} Lonergan, “What Are Judgments of Value,” 142, recommends exactly this work at the end of his section on feelings.

\textsuperscript{99} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 70.

\textsuperscript{100} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 70.
The world of linguistic meaning is virtually co-extensive with the world of aesthetics. Some literary genera are works of art: novels, plays, lyrics, and poetry. Poetry asks the reader not just to understand, but to feel. The reading of poetry, or of the lyrics of a song, in a didactic or conversational manner often produce a humor founded on incongruity, since the forms of literary language use figures of speech and other conventions that are appropriate for the world of art, not logical discourse. Yet they do employ linguistic units that are capable of precise and nuanced meaning. Poetry, therefore, and other types of literary language, “floats” somewhere in-between the world of symbols and the world of logic, with the full capacity for feeling of a work of art, yet the potential for precision and near-endless flexibility characteristic of linguistic meaning.

Distinct from the literary language of poetry and the novel is the ordinary language of everyday discourse. “It is the language of home and school, of industry and commerce, of enjoyment and misfortune, of the mass media and casual conversation.” This language changes quickly and varies from place to place. It seeks not necessarily what is beautiful but what is useful for communicating the needs of the moment in the moment. To that end, it does not pursue exact or full expression of meaning unless such is required.

101 Lonergan, Method, 72.
102 Lonergan, Method, 72.
103 Lonergan, Method, 71.
104 Lonergan, Method, 71.
The basis of ordinary language is common sense.\(^{105}\) Interestingly, Lonergan indicates that, “Commonsense knowledge is not part of feeling.”\(^{106}\) Many of the communications of “home and school,” and many of the situations these communications regard, will be charged with feeling. Indeed, Lonergan indicates this world is colored by the subject’s “desires, hopes, fears, joys, sorrows.”\(^{107}\) Perhaps the answer lies in the role of ordinary language to seek the useful. *Uti* (use), not *frui* (enjoy), is usually (not necessarily) the mode proper to ordinary language. When the evocation or communication of feeling becomes the point of one’s communication, perhaps one is verging out of the world of ordinary language and at least imitating the world of art.

When language becomes specialized for communicating precise meaning among specialists, it becomes technical.\(^{108}\) Technical language can exist even in under-developed societies: the hunters learn special terms to communicate with other hunters, the gatherers learn special terms to communicate with other gatherers. However, the technical nature of language can greatly increase and be carried much farther when a culture has experienced theoretical development.\(^{109}\)

\(^{105}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 71. Common sense is an incomplete set of insights, possessed corporately by a society and partially by the various individuals in that society. The character of this network of insights is that the addition of one or two further insights into the particular situation one is in will allow one to know what is practical to do. For example, faced with a practical decision, does one look before one leaps? But, she who hesitates is lost! A further insight into the nature of the situation is needed, but once obtained, the application of conventional wisdom allows one to know what to say, what to do, how to solve the problem. Common sense is egocentric—it regards things as related to the subject and not things as related to other things. It is also particular to each group. One man’s meat is, after all, another’s poison. Lonergan, *Method*, 71-72.

\(^{106}\) Lonergan, “What Are Judgments of Value?”, 150.

\(^{107}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 72.


Again, interestingly, Lonergan indicates that feeling does play a role in some technical language. “But when you start getting into systematic knowledge, when you start setting the feelings out, this knowing process is going on but the feelings more or less are there.” 110 Technical language is certainly involved in the development and communication of systematic meaning.

I’m not certain what kinds of feeling are involved in the technical diagrams of an aeronautical engineer, beyond the beauty of a well-accomplished product and the effect that feeling can always have to bias us away from certain exercises of reason or encourage us toward some others. 111 However, Lonergan does give one clear example of the role of feeling in the systematic function of meaning. When speaking of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, he indicates that these doctrines differ in some important respects from the doctrines affirmed by the Ecumenical Councils (such as the Council of Nicaea). 112 These doctrines, at the point where the Church defined them, were not controversial within the Catholic Church; simply, the “solemn teaching office” now said what the “ordinary teaching office” had been saying. 113 He then adds, “Perhaps I might suggest that human psychology and specifically the refinement of human feelings is the area to be explored in coming to understand the development of the Marian doctrines.” 114 Now, the Marian doctrines are expressed with technical precision, and


111 Remember that Lonergan considers “pure reason” to be an abstraction, not something evidenced in concrete human existence.

112 Lonergan, Method, 320.

113 Lonergan, Method, 320. Whereas the Council of Nicaea met to settle a great controversy, and ended up producing an even larger one.

114 Lonergan, Method, 320.
the history of their development is both in systematic theology and a proper topic of systematic study. Yet centrally one here finds the role of human feelings.

Religious and moral conversion can clearly affect the various genera of linguistic meaning. In relation to literary language, the effect of the transformation of feeling will parallel its effect on art. In the genus of ordinary language, the effect will not be evident so much on the language itself; the person who is communicating, however, the world that person knows, and the meanings being communicated will show the presence or absence of the conversions. In technical language, the refinement of human feeling is one aspect that the presence or absence of conversion will affect; the others are too numerous to mention.

The place of feeling in technical language should not really surprise one. The development of philosophy, for example, is a highly technical field employing a set of terms impenetrable to most outside it. Yet, as with any field that self-consciously moves out of the past into the present and future, the presence or absence of conversion is the foundational factor in how the discipline’s practitioners will conduct it. Not just philosophy of God, but ethics, metaphysics, aesthetics, epistemology, hermeneutics, and every other philosophical area is affected by whether one has been transformed by an apprehension of transcendent value (religious conversion), whether that apprehension has trans-valued one’s other values thereby giving one a real commitment to the good (moral conversion), and whether one knows that one is a knower of the world and has taken responsibility for what that means (intellectual conversion). But the conversions, especially religious and moral, affect us through feelings.

The transformation accorded by religious conversion in the world of linguistic meaning reaches its apex in the outer word of religion tradition. The Gospel is the
real world mediated to us by meanings, through the language of Scripture, worship, preaching, teaching, and prayer. As Tillich and Otto argued, the meanings these words have depend on our inner religious experience. Religious conversion gives us eyes that see and ears that hear the vital and changing word; without religious conversion, one may as well be preaching at Babel.

Frederick Lawrence has argued that the outer word of religion cooperates with the inner word of religious conversion in establishing, or re-establishing, our foundational language. Foundational language includes linguistic meaning but goes beyond it. It indicates the way we ask and answer the most fundamental questions concerning human existence and action.

As children of our cultures and of the modern world, we have largely taken over (or been taken-over by) “alien and alienating languages.” Even when we speak the language of the word of God, the meanings of the words we use are informed by this absurdity, and not by redemption and love. Therefore, to overcome the secular and nihilistic heritage we have been bequeathed (and too easily accepted) we will need to unlearn the foundational language we may have already learned.

In having our foundational language transformed, we are redeemed and constituted in conversation with the outer word. As Lawrence says,

God’s self-communication in grace involves not merely an entry into a new, entitative, supernatural order of being, but the catching up of our human being as conversationally stunted or deformed self-meaning into the self-meaning constitutive of the Trinity. The gift of God’s

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115 See Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 260-268, for the way in which the outer word of religious tradition cooperates with the inner word of religious conversion to transform our foundational language, and thereby the human good.

116 Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 249. The discussion of foundational language could as easily go in the next section on “Incarnate Meaning.” Due to the linguistic connection, it seemed best to me to conclude the discussion of linguistic meaning with it rather than have it open my explanation of incarnate meaning.

117 Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 249.
love liberates human *liberty* when we fall in love with God. But the *conversation* by which we fall in love with God is also an entry into a new set of *interpersonal relations* with Father, Son, and Spirit.\(^{118}\)

In conjunction with religious conversion, the outer word communicates to us the reality of our sinfulness and the gift of forgiveness.\(^{119}\) It also thereby radically changes the story by which we live.\(^{120}\) Just as the gift of God’s love joins our dramatic being with the drama of others who are being saved, so it changes us to those who gratefully speak of redemption, to those who join the story of salvation.

**Incarnate Meaning**

Incarnate meaning is “the meaning of a person, of his way of life, of his words, or of his deeds.”\(^{121}\) It combines most or all of the other kinds of meaning, taking them all together. The meaning may be known and recognized widely, or it may be a meaning particular to a few, or to a particular tradition or group.

Incarnate meaning need not be individual; the achievement of the Three-Hundred at Thermopylae communicates a meaning embodied in a group.\(^{122}\) Incarnate meaning may be taken from a fictional character—Hamlet has his meaning as surely as does Winston Churchill. Incarnate meaning can emanate from a person’s whole life and whole being.\(^{123}\) As with the Three-Hundred, one would also expect it can emanate from one central or pivotal life moment.

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\(^{118}\) Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 267.

\(^{119}\) Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 262-263.

\(^{120}\) Lawrence, “The Human Good and Christian Conversation,” 262-263.

\(^{121}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 73.

\(^{122}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 73.

\(^{123}\) Lonergan, *Method*, 73.
The question of incarnate meaning returns me to the discussion of the charts I embarked upon in chapter three. For the human good is the meaning, corporately, that we incarnate. The two main charts represented, on one hand, simply the human good, and on the other hand, the human good as it emerges from mere biology and is incorporated into the life of Heaven. I did not complete the discussion of them in that chapter, for I found that to do so I needed to explain the actions of the conversions that orient the sets of operations and relations represented in the charts.

In my discussion of sin, I showed how Lonergan explained the way bias, alienation, decline and absurdity can distort the human good. As I have now explained, the healing of sin occurs through the conversions. Religious conversion is foundational among these, although moral conversion most directly affects the probable rectitude of the human relations in the charts. Yet religious conversion, by definition, requires operative grace, a movement that is beyond human ability and draws us beyond the limitations of this world; moral conversion likewise requires cooperating with God’s grace.

Incarnate meaning incorporates the other carriers of meaning. The outer word of religious conversion can give us new symbols that we cannot ignore because they resonate so strongly with the inner word of religious conversion. In a way, the life and death of Jesus is a symbol to us, a sign—we receive an apprehension of a higher life (and cross) we are called to, that it is beautiful to embrace. In the dramatic patterns of our life, we can come to have an apprehension of who we are and what we are called to; this apprehension can be encouraged or deepened through the liturgy of our worship and the worlds of literature and art. The Gospel can transform our foundational language. Systematic teaching can help us resolve difficulties and enrich

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124 The chart of the human good is from *Method*, the more expansive chart from “Finality, Love, Marriage.”
the network of meanings available to us. Genuine spirituality develops when the 
apprehension of value effectively shapes the way in which we cooperate with 
supernatural grace. We receive a changed way of life. We receive transformed 
selves, for the meaning we incarnate has become different.

Because of the besetting problem of sin, the human good, to remain good, 
cannot remain purely human. Here is the crux of the relationship between the two 
charts. The chart on the human good does not mirror exactly the chart from “Finality, 
Love, Marriage.” Yet for the human good to evidence a true good of order, it must 
become oriented to transcendent value. Religious conversion is the secure orientation 
that grounds the network of operations found in the human good.

The nature of religious conversion, however, is presaged in the fact that the 
chart in “Finality, Love, Marriage” has two levels or stages of elevation. In this chart, 
just as human friendship elevates organistic human sexuality, so also charity 
(friendship with God) elevates ordinary human friendship. Likewise, moral 
conversion and religious conversion have a similar structure. Moral conversion is 
conversion to the good. But religious conversion is conversion to God, the greatest 
good and the good of every other good.125

The similarity in structure between religious and moral conversion reflects the 
self-donating nature of God, in whose image we are made. Lonergan, movingly, 
affirms,

To conceive of God as originating value and the world as terminal 
value implies that God too is self-transcending and that the world is the

125 This work examines the relation of religious and moral conversion; intellectual conversion 
has not, therefore, received the prominence it actually has in Lonergan’s works. Here, let me note that 
intellectual conversion and religious conversion also have similar structures. Just as God is the greatest 
good, God is also the highest truth. All of contingent being exists only to the extent that it imitates 
God, participates in the Being of God. To realize that one is a knower, and to realize what that means, 
is also sublated by religious conversion. For truly to know the world of contingent being as it is, one 
must be placed within the horizon of faith. The culmination of wonder, our erōs toward the world of 
being which elevates us above merely biological existence, is found in the Beatific Vision.
fruit of his self-transcendence, the expression and manifestation of his benevolence and beneficence, his glory. As the excellence of the son is the glory of the father, so too the excellence of mankind is the glory of God. To say that God created the world for his glory is to say that he created it not for his sake but for ours. He made us in his image, for our authenticity consists in being like him, in self-transcending, in being origins of value, in true love.126

Therefore, the proper rectitude of human relations requires moral conversion, because only in moral conversion does one choose the good for its own sake. Yet religious conversion is proper to all human relations, too, for all of being proceeds from God, and its excellence reflects God’s self-donating character, wisdom, and might. In religious conversion, we find what mere moral conversion lacks. For while moral conversion works to return us to right relations with each other, the deeper (or higher) condition of those right relations is each of our fundamental relationships with God.127

In the concrete constitution of the human good, religious conversion—that personal, inner word that transforms us—operates in conjunction with the outer word of some tradition. To the extent that the institutions transmitting this outer word are authentic in relation to the inner word of religious conversion, they become a light to lighten the nations. The sets of meanings and values that constitute a good of order can be challenged and shaped by these crystallizing voices. To the extent that they fail, the inner word of religious conversion calls the people that form them toward the authenticity the fallen institutions are betraying. These institutions include overtly religious bodies; however, the basic character of all our institutions will be affected by

126 Lonergan, Method, 116-117.

127 See Deborah Savage, The Subjective Dimension of Human Work: The Conversion of the Acting Person According to Karol Wojtila/Pope John Paul II and Bernard Lonergan, American University Studies in Theology and Religion 7 (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 204-230, for an account of the way religious conversion transforms the meaning and character of our active lives, both personal and corporate.
the presence or absence of conversion and the authenticity of the people in the institutions to that conversion.128

As motivated by religious conversion, our lives together can come to express the dynamic of prayer. As explained by Ignatius Loyola, the only secure source of an election is the movement of God to transform the person making the election into one who is in love with God.129 Of course, the most fundamental election is not one we make. It is the divine initiative itself, transforming us by love in religious conversion.

Prayer, in Christian understanding, responds to God’s initiative, speaking forth God’s goodness, yearning for that final blessedness that is to come.130 Yet prayer is more than words, as evidenced by such disciplines as fasting and silence. In the choices that we make, to the extent that we respond to the divine initiative, we transcend merely moral action and reflect a choice (election) occasioned by cooperation with God. In living lives transformed by that consolation without a cause, we embrace, in our actions, the dynamic of prayer.

Religious conversion affects more than individuals. As explained in the chapter on the conversions, it can come to characterize a group, or even a society. To the extent that the choices and meanings that constitute and govern our life together are themselves governed by the divine initiative, our common life takes on the character of common prayer.


129 See my discussion under religious experience.

130 See, for example, Michael J. Buckley, ed., The Catholic Prayer Book (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1986), 1-2.
Thereby, our incarnate meaning becomes that of a worshiping community.\textsuperscript{131} The human good of which we are a part, in becoming good, is oriented toward the absolutely supernatural. As I noted in chapter two, much of Lonergan’s theology concretizes the theme of \textit{exitus-reditus}. We, made together in the image of God, express God’s glory by turning our hearts, our lives, toward God.\textsuperscript{132}

In the presence of religious conversion, then, the horizon of human destiny is religious hope. The shape and momentum of our historical being, both individual and corporate, through being-in-love, becomes cooperation with God’s grace. In this cooperation, we find an authentic way to live toward a reality that stretches beyond the horizon of death. We begin to live as citizens \textit{in via} of an eternal community that knows God face to face, that spontaneously lives out God’s love.

\textbf{Religious and Moral Conversions Related}

Already in this chapter I have explained many ways in which religious conversion is related to moral conversion. To conclude this chapter, and this work, I will now draw those explanations together, organizing them and expanding on them when necessary. In so doing, I intend to show that religious conversion sublates moral conversion, and that, \textit{de facto}, religious conversion is necessary for moral conversion.

\textsuperscript{131} See Lawrence, “Fragility of Consciousness,” 208-209.

\textsuperscript{132} I have stressed throughout this chapter how on many points Lonergan resonates with Augustine And here one assuredly finds a theology in harmony with the \textit{City of God}. Yet perhaps a lyrical voice does the power of Lonergan’s thought more justice; in the \textit{Canticle of Brother Sun}, Francis of Assisi sings the activity of all created life as it glorifies together its Creator.
Religious Conversion Sublates Moral Conversion

Lonergan clearly states that religious conversion sublates moral conversion. As I explained in chapter three, Lonergan uses “sublation” in Karl Rahner’s sense of the word. Lonergan saw sublation as the incorporation of a reality into a new, broader or higher, reality or context in a way that de-centers the former reality but, paradoxically, makes it more itself. Sublation, thereby, involves a purifying secondary, but not primary, negation. The mistakes of the lower reality are corrected, especially the mistake by which the lower reality held itself to be ultimate, the last word. But the essential character, the authentic nature, of the sublated reality remains.

First, religious conversion incorporates moral conversion into a new, higher, reality or context. The proper context of moral conversion is the rectitude of the relations and operations that constitute the human good. But religious conversion places the rectitude of those relations in proper relation to the knowledge of God and the life of charity in Heaven.

Second, religious conversion de-centers moral conversion. From the viewpoint of the person who wishes merely to be moral, the rectitude of human relations is the proper end of life. Yet our need for religious conversion shows that the human good, in order to be good, cannot remain merely human. Ethics, rather than being an end in itself, ends up needing the support of a higher reality that thenceforth will claim first place.

Third, religious conversion thereby makes moral conversion more itself. Because we are made in the image of God, who is also self-transcending, the glory of God is expressed in the excellence of our human relations. Religious conversion

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134 See the way Lonergan appropriates Kierkegaard in *Topics in Education* concerning the relation of the ethical and the religious spheres. Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 179-180.
motivates us to moral rectitude in a way that moral conversion itself could never achieve. For while the claims of conscience in moral conversion could demand human perfection, religious conversion sets us in relation to an absolutely supernatural source of value. In the language of medieval theology, we are thereby drawn not just to will the good in human terms, but are moved to will the good in a way appropriate for God. The nature of our judgments of value, and the motivation we have to choose in line with the good we have come to know, become transformed by the divine initiative. We begin to find and evince a deeper, more loving morality, governed by the Law of the Cross.

Moral conversion, therefore, receives a purifying secondary negation by being sublated into religious conversion. Yet the essential character of moral conversion remains, because being transformed by God’s love enables us better to know the good and motivates us better to choose it. We have received an apprehension of transcendent value that transvalues every other value, and transformed feelings that reveal values to us. In religious conversion, we choose the good, the greatest good and the good of every other good—God. Just as moral conversion heals and perfects the operations and relations in the human good, religious conversion works with moral and intellectual conversion to remove the root of radical sin in us. Thereby, it works concomitantly in the human good with moral conversion to heal and elevate the human good toward truly transcendent value. The heart of moral conversion is self-transcendence. In religious conversion, we are brought into the horizon of faith, occasioned by the gift of a self-transcendence that transcends this world.
Religious Conversion Critical for Moral Conversion

In asserting that religious conversion is a necessary condition for the attainment of moral conversion, I am on more controversial ground. Several passages in Lonergan, in fact, seem clearly to state the opposite. For example, having introduced religious, moral, and intellectual conversion in the chapter in *Method* on “Dialectics,” Lonergan states, “All three types of conversion may be lacking; any one may be present, or any two, or all three. Even prescinding from differences in the thoroughness of the conversion, there are eight radically differing types.”

Prominent commentators on the conversions, whose work I admire, take Lonergan here at his word, stating that moral conversion does not necessarily require an (at least logically) prior religious conversion.

In the face of such evidence, why do I make a contrary claim? There are several reasons. A number of other passages in Lonergan support the critical nature of religious conversion for moral conversion. Furthermore the enemies of moral conversion present among and within us are fierce, and only successfully combated by religious conversion. Also, the order of feelings necessary for moral conversion is

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135 Lonergan, *Method*, 247. The eight types would be: 1) totally unconverted; 2) only religiously converted; 3) only morally converted; 4) only intellectually converted; 5) only religiously and morally converted; 6) only religiously and intellectually converted; 7) only morally and intellectually converted; and 8) religiously, morally, and intellectually converted. See also Lonergan, “Doctrinal Pluralism,” 86.

136 For example, Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion*, 112, states, Moral conversion is basically a shift in the criterion of one’s decisions and choices from satisfactions to values. In living up to the norm established by moral conversion, one will opt for what one judges to be “the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict.” Such basic moral conversion should be seen as independent of the other conversions, inasmuch as this shift of criterion does not necessarily presuppose a cognitive, affective, or religious conversion. It would, however, definitely presuppose some significant level of affective and cognitive development.

By “independent,” Conn may here mean separate. However, he may mean merely distinct. The latter position is the one I will argue for, and if Conn means that then we are in fundamental agreement.
provided only by religious conversion. Lonergan, finally, believed that the attainment of natural morality requires the work of God’s grace.

First, a number of passages in Lonergan’s later works support the *de facto* necessity of religious conversion for moral conversion. For example, in *Method* Lonergan states that being in love in an unrestricted manner is “the habitual actuation of man’s capacity for self-transcendence; it is the religious conversion that grounds both moral and intellectual conversion; it provides the real criterion by which all else is judged…”


Also, Lonergan explains,

> Though religious conversion sublates moral, and moral conversion sublates intellectual, one is not to infer that intellectual comes first and then moral and finally religious. On the contrary, from a causal viewpoint, one would say that first there is God’s gift of his love. Next, the eye of this love reveals values in their splendor, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and beliefs are the seeds of intellectual conversion.


Furthermore, Lonergan states,

> Religious conversion is the basic precept of the Old Covenant and the New …. From religious conversion there follows moral conversion, when the criteria of our practical judgments shift from satisfactions to values. From religious and moral conversion there emerges … intellectual conversion.

139 Lonergan, “Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,” 308.

Several of these statements occur in *Method*, the same work that gives us the “eight radically differing types” assertion I quoted above. It seems that these quotations support a *de facto* priority, that at least usually, or for the most part, religious conversion must precede moral conversion. Therefore, I think it at least possible that these statements indicate that the “eight radically differing types” may best be taken
differently than indicating that moral conversion does not depend on religious conversion. However, rather than leave this discussion in a tug-of-war between seemingly contrary statements, I think it is best to look at the intelligible order of the conversions according to the way Lonergan understands them.

Second, therefore, consider the enemies present in us to moral conversion: concupiscence and pride. As I explained in the section on feelings, the general superactual value response toward the good (analogous to moral conversion) needs the general superactual value response toward God (analogous to religious conversion) because only charity can successfully combat concupiscence and pride. As Lonergan stated in *Method*, the eyes of supernatural love bring about the realization of values. Among fallen human beings, the potential for moral conversion is radically limited because of how disordered are our affections. Why would, or how could, a person dominated by pride choose a source of value outside of himself? Moral conversion indicates that a person makes that choice, but only religious conversion provides the means by which he can make that choice.

Third, the order of feelings critical for moral conversion is provided only by religious conversion. Again, the general superactual value response toward the good needs the general superactual value response toward God because it needs a transcendent point of value to know what is truly good. Irrationality and irresponsibility have become the norm for us; even if we desire to do what is right, we do not know what it is. Religious conversion provides us with real self-transcendence toward transcendent value, a value that trans-values all our other values. It removes us from the order of *ressentiment* and places us in the horizon ordered by love.
Conn recognizes the need in a person for some affective development before moral conversion takes place, but not for affective conversion.\textsuperscript{140} Let us examine what would be required of that affective development, though. Perhaps it would be a transient motion of grace, opening the way for moral conversion. As Lonergan explains in \textit{Method}, lest the experience of religious conversion be too violent, and thereby disrupt the recipient’s psychological continuity, God does act in “transient dispositions” that prepare the subject to receive religious conversion.\textsuperscript{141} Perhaps there are similar transient dispositions that allow moral conversion. Yet moral conversion is a habitual orientation, not a transient disposition. It is a vertical exercise of liberty and places one in a whole new horizon. Could it be occasioned by a transient disposition? As explained in the previous paragraphs, the relation of moral conversion to the defeat of concupiscence and pride and to the apprehension of transcendent value cannot be merely transient. If they return, moral conversion loses its basis for orientation and effective power. It seems that the kind of affective development required to ground moral conversion would be continuous.

However, it is possible that the continuous apprehension of transcendent value that allows moral conversion to take place might be significant and continuous yet fall short of religious conversion. As far as I can find in Lonergan, religious conversion is the sole source of the continuous apprehension of transcendent value sufficient to overturn the effects of the biases and reorder us morally. Only religious conversion rescues us from the “radical dimension of lovelessness.”\textsuperscript{142} It seems to me that to

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{140} See above quote. Recall that what Conn refers to as affective conversion, Lonergan in \textit{Method} refers to as religious conversion.
\item Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 107. In explanation, Lonergan refers to \textit{Grace and Freedom}, in which he had worked through Thomas’ various senses in which God converts the subject to God. Some of these are occasional and transient, preparatory for the gifts of sanctifying grace and the habit of charity.
\item Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 243.
\end{itemize}
expect our moral world to be reshaped by anything short of the gift of God’s love far
underestimates our problem as sinful human beings.

I think the key factor that may account for the ambiguity in Lonergan’s
expression is our fallenness. If one were considering human subjects in an unfallen
state, one might argue that moral development in these beings toward natural
beatitude could proceed on purely natural terms. Yet for us fallen ones, Lonergan
clearly stated that God’s grace is necessary even to achieve natural beatitude.

Therefore, I argue that the attainment of moral or intellectual conversion
without the prior attainment of religious conversion is best considered a theoretical
possibility, not normally a concrete possibility for a fallen human being. De facto,
religious conversion functions as a hypothetically necessary ground for moral
conversion, rendering moral conversion a matter of both operative and cooperative
grace. While this reading has the difficulty of seemingly flying in the face of the
plain reading of some passages in Lonergan’s works, it avoids contradicting the plain
meaning of numerous other passages. Also, it is far more coherent with the
Lonergan’s overall theology.

As a foundation, then, religious conversion grounds moral conversion.
Religious conversion also makes moral conversion more probable. As explained in
the section on feelings, the general superactual value response toward God makes
more probable the general superactual value response toward the good. God is the
greatest good, and to love God is to love that greatest good absolutely. But this world

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143 See Lonergan’s discussion of natural beatitude in De Ente Supernaturali, 2. See also

144 Natural beatitude would necessarily include moral rectitude within the human good. As
Augustine says in the Retractiones to On Free Choice of the Will, humans fell by free will but must get
back up by God’s grace. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, tr. by T. Williams (Indianapolis:
Hackett, 1993), 129.

has being to the extent that it imitates God; God is also the greatest good of every other good. Therefore, the love of God makes more probable a love for God’s creation, for the eyes of love come to see the value in this world that comes from God.

Also, in that it is a foundation, the dialectical character of our authenticity after religious conversion will have a profound effect on the stability and effectiveness of our moral conversion. One will expect moral conversion to become unstable, or even to be reversed, in the measure of the lack of authenticity in one who is religiously converted. Conversely, a highly authentic religiously converted person is more probably morally authentic.

The effect could conceivably go the other way, as well. A friend of mine once said, “When I want to sin, then God is most unreal to me.” Because of the structural similarity of the conversions, a serious defect in our commitment to good for its own sake would affect our love of God, the greatest good.

Conclusion

As I explained in chapter seven, religious conversion and moral conversion lead to transformations of our feelings that orient us within the world. These changes constitute deep re-orderings of the human person. In fact, the both constitute the two most basic changes in horizon possible for us—true changes in who and what we are, and in the world in which we participate (and to an extent constitute).

Intersubjectively, aesthetically, symbolically, linguistically, and incarnationally, we become different beings living in a different world. We form intersubjective communities of feeling that respond to transcendent value, become part of the drama of those who are being saved, feelings and understandings are transformed in our symbolic and worlds, our whole linguistic world experiences
transformation, including our foundational language, and becomes capable of
incarnating the divine initiative that transforms the human good into worship and
prayer.

In this process, religious conversion sublates moral conversion. It
incorporates the rectitude of human relations into the horizon of transcendent value,
thereby showing what truly right human relationships should be. Religious
conversion is also foundational for moral conversion. *De facto*, religious conversion
is necessary for moral conversion to occur, but being present, religious conversion
makes it more probable that moral conversion will occur. Additionally, because the
authenticity of religious conversion is never a permanent achievement, the ebb and
flow of our religious authenticity affects the efficaciousness of our moral conversion.
CONCLUSION

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.
—Ephesians 2:8-10

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
—Romans 8:28

Augustine, in his seventh homily on the First Epistle of John, gives the striking admonition,

Love, and do what you will (Dilege, et quod vis fac): whether you hold your peace, through love hold your peace; whether you cry out, through love cry out; whether you correct, through love correct; whether you spare, through love do you spare: let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good.1

Few quotations of Augustine are more used and misused. Augustine makes clear that first of all there is God’s love, transforming our hearts, drawing us to love God and thereafter to love those whom God has made. By so doing, we imitate our Creator and Redeemer, for God is love. By participating in the love of God, we who are made in God’s image are able to live lives that are truly good. This love gives us ears that hear (Luke 8:8), and only it orders us rightly in all our lives.

In this work, I have argued that religious conversion sublates moral conversion and also, de facto, serves as a necessary foundation for moral conversion. Religious conversion acts this way by transforming the religiously converted subject’s feelings. Through this radical change in the subject’s motivation, and the consequent change in

the kinds of meanings that constitute the subject, religious conversion also transforms
the nature of the human good of which the subject is a part. It thereby provides the
basis for the right ordering of the human good toward transcendent value and a
supernatural end.

I did not have Augustine’s homily in mind when I started this work, but I
surely think it appropriate for the work’s end. The question of religious conversion is
that of how love orders us, transforms us, becomes the basis for everything else in our
lives. Religious conversion is the consolation without a cause, the election in which
God changes us and frees us to love—first of all to love God, and second to love our
neighbor.

Religious conversion thereby sublates moral conversion. Moral conversion is
a commitment to an ultimate source of value that is not oneself—seeking to choose
that which is truly of value, simply because it is of value. Religious conversion places
one in right relation to the truly ultimate source of value, and love always seeks the
beloved for the sake of the beloved. While moral conversion looses its claim to be the
ultimate arbiter of human conduct, it gains an even deeper relation to what is truly
good.

Religious conversion is also, de facto, a necessary foundation for moral
conversion. That which is truly of value often does not motivate us. We are
disordered, biased, in a dynamic of reSentiment in which the irrational and loveless
have become normal for us. Religious conversion is a transforming desire that
transforms our desire, motivating us toward that which is truly worth while. Those
giants that oppose moral conversion, concupiscence and pride, are met by the self-
donation of love. Dilege, et quod vis fac. Otherwise, whatever we choose will reflect
our concupiscence and pride.
The transforming desire that religious conversion both is and effects reveals to us the world of true value. We are related to our supernatural end through the apprehension of transcendent value which places us within the horizon of faith. Through this conversion, our feelings are reordered. That is, the intentional responses to value that previously showed the effects of bias and ressentiment come to judge more rightly about the value of the world. Furthermore, we receive the motivation love brings, moving us toward God, orienting us within the horizon of faith.

These transformed feelings—affective insights—are proper or improper (proximate or remote) conditions of all phases of our conscious intentionality. Love communicates to us the value of attending to reality, of intelligently understanding it, of reasonably judging what it is or is not, and of choosing responsibly with respect to it. Benevolence and beneficence are the spontaneous actions of someone in love. The love which comes to orient us via religious conversion directs us first to God but then to the world God has made. Religious conversion reveals our attending, understanding, knowing and choosing as moral issues, and it provides the motivation that anchors the rectitude of these conscious operations.

Religious conversion and moral conversion do not act in these ways as absolute arbiters of motivation or action. Rather, their effects are understandable through emergent probability. That we are oriented within a horizon means that it is more probable that we will choose a certain way. Religious conversion and moral conversion do not guarantee that we will choose rightly or be faithful to God. However, they do act as a current, adding a motivating character to our feelings, that draws us toward real and transcendent value. When we live authentically to them, we become more likely to follow the transcendental precepts, more likely to draw closer to God.
Religious and moral conversions thereby alter the meanings that constitute the human good. First, they alter the religiously and morally converted subjects. Conversion is a personal, intimate, thing; yet it can come to characterize a group. The transformation of our feelings is felt in the intersubjective basis of our being, in the way we choose to actuate our freedom, in the institutions we form together, and in the whole good of order of which we are a part. Religious and moral conversions transform the feelings that inform the meanings that constitute us. We ourselves, therefore, and the good of order we participate in, come to reflect the operative and cooperative graces that constitute these conversions.

These graces orient us toward a supernatural end. Religious conversion obviously relates us immediately with God. Even moral conversion, however, comes to find that God is the greatest good, that this world is made by God and has its being by imitating God, and that humans are made in God’s image. Therefore, rightly valuing this world requires a source of value beyond this world, that teaches us what true value is and trans-values all our other values. Love of God and love of neighbor walk hand in hand.

The human good, therefore, cannot remain merely human if it is to become truly good. To be truly good requires being ordered and transformed by the love of God (that is, we must receive a created communication of the divine nature whereby there are operations in us through which we attain God as he is, to use Lonergan’s older language). Thereby, the character of human being and doing (personal, historical, and social) becomes a response to the divine initiative. Our lives together take on the aspect of common prayer to the God who works all things for the good.

This is appropriate. The only way that we are first causes in and of ourselves is with respect to our sin. We are free to initiate distinct chains of causality—by
God’s grace we have this ability. Yet sin is a strict privation; in and of ourselves, we create only nothing. The right determination of our freedom is in conspiracy with the divine. By receiving from God the right orientation of our being, and then cooperating with the work of God’s grace, we are given the ability to participate in true creativity. Our greatest creative product, of course, is ourselves and our communities as living rightly, living unto God. And this is not from ourselves, not by works, lest anyone should boast. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, flooding our hearts with God’s love.

This work has endeavored to answer one basic question: “What is the relation of moral conversion to religious conversion in the later writings of Bernard Lonergan?” In doing so, it has journeyed from Lonergan’s earliest published works through those written near the end of his life. Along the way I have needed to explain transcendental method and the place of the conversions in it. Moreover, conversion has meaning as part of the hierarchical order of the universe, for it is the source of rectitude for the meanings, operations, and relations that constitute the human good. Conversion also has meaning—as conversion—relative to the sin that darkens and distorts the good.

Many further questions remain. In particular, intellectual conversion has not here received the prominence it has in Lonergan’s writings. As I noted in the introduction, I think that including intellectual conversion in this discussion would add not one but three further relations.² Additionally, the nature of religious conversion as the foundation for a distinctly Christian ethics has been noted, but much work remains to explain and build on that foundation. However important these

² Three extra relations would have to be discussed: the relation of moral and intellectual conversions, the relation of intellectual and religious conversions, and the relation of moral and intellectual conversions (taken together) to religious conversion. It is an interesting question, further, as to whether all of these are really distinct relations.
questions may be, I have endeavored to stay true to my initial inquiry, and I have now answered it as best I can. In so doing, I hope I have presented something helpful for understanding Lonergan. On that note, I commit this work, my readers, and myself to the grace of God in which we stand.
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