

# METHOD

*Journal of Lonergan Studies, n.s.*

Volume 4

Number 2

Fall 2013

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*METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies*  
is published by the Lonergan Institute at Boston College

## ERNEST BECKER AND BERNARD LONERGAN: AN INITIAL MEETING

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CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST ERNEST BECKER won a Pulitzer Prize for his 1973 work, *The Denial of Death*.<sup>1</sup> I view *The Denial of Death* as a work that beckons its readers to be authentic. The same might be said of philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan's 1957 work, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* and his 1972 work, *Method in Theology*. This commonality alone would be a suitable reason for putting these works into contact, but there are in fact many other points of overlap. Comparing and contrasting their views on such points, including on what it means to be authentic, proves surprising and fruitful. It is surprising in that there is often an initial concurrence between Becker and Lonergan; it is fruitful in that their ideas come into sharper focus through the exercise. It is the act of comparing and contrasting itself that interests me in what follows, not defending either Becker's or Lonergan's views. My subtitle, "An Initial Meeting," is meant to convey that point – as well to convey that I will only be appealing to *The Denial of Death*, *Insight*, and *Method in Theology*. To consider other works by Becker and Lonergan would be to undertake a much lengthier endeavour.

Whether Becker knew of Lonergan is something I cannot pronounce upon. In the opposite direction, Lonergan clearly knew of Becker, for he refers to his work on two occasions. In a footnote in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan refers to a span of pages from Becker's 1968 work, *The Structure of Evil*; the span covers a section entitled, "A Post-Freudian View of the Hu-

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<sup>1</sup>To be specific, Becker won the 1974 Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction. For a biography of Becker, see Sally A. Kenel, *Mortal Gods: Ernest Becker and Fundamental Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 9-27.



man Personality."<sup>2</sup> Becker makes some contentions in this section that are foundational in *The Denial of Death*. Therefore, despite the fact that *Method in Theology* appeared a year before *The Denial of Death*, Lonergan was exposed to some ideas from that work while writing *Method in Theology*. In a footnote in the 1980 article, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time," Lonergan refers to *The Denial of Death* as a whole.<sup>3</sup> I will refrain from analyzing the context of these references; I mention them only to highlight the fact that Lonergan found sufficient common ground with Becker to refer to his work. At the same time, the restriction of these references to footnotes, as well as the absence of additional references, indicates cautiousness in Lonergan's appropriation of Becker.<sup>4</sup>

My approach in what follows will be to first supply an overview of *The Denial of Death*. My overview will not be exhaustive; it will focus on areas of overlap with *Insight* and *Method in Theology*.<sup>5</sup> I will then explore Lonergan's views in those areas, pointing out compatibility and incompatibility with Becker's views.

### 1. AN OVERVIEW OF ERNEST BECKER'S *THE DENIAL OF DEATH*

Becker obtained a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at Syracuse University in 1960 and went on to teach at institutions in the United States and Canada. He authored nine books over the course of his life. *The Denial of Death*, pub-

<sup>2</sup>Lonergan's reference reads, Ernest Becker, *The Structure of Evil* (New York: G. Braziller, 1968), 154-66. See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 284n8.

<sup>3</sup>The reference appears in a footnote affixed to this statement: "Freud's mechanist assumptions have been exorcised by various types of hermeneutic." See Bernard Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time," in *A Third Collection: Papers*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 65n16.

<sup>4</sup>Lonergan scholars have also found it worthwhile to engage Becker – with reservations. For example, see Robert M. Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2006), 38n47, 50, 51n94, 93n93, 130, 180; Glenn Hughes, *Transcendence and History: The Search for Ultimacy from Ancient Societies to Postmodernity* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 202-13.

<sup>5</sup>I have chosen not to rely on secondary sources in composing my overview of *The Denial of Death*. Although my decision has the benefit of keeping the length of the present endeavour manageable, there is also a certain risk involved in offering a personal overview. As Jarvis Streeter explains, "While Becker was a brilliant intuitive thinker, his presentation of his theories is often diffuse, lacking in systematic clarity, thereby making certain and clear interpretation of aspects of his overall perspective difficult." Jarvis Streeter, *Human Nature, Human Evil, and Religion: Ernest Becker and Christian Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), xiii.

lished in 1973, remains his most well-known work. Becker gifts his readers with a thesis statement on the opening page. He writes,

The main thesis of this book is that . . . the idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity – activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man.<sup>6</sup>

A few words are necessary here as to why Becker is advancing this thesis. I have suggested that *The Denial of Death* is a work that calls its readers to be authentic. I need to make it clear that this is not Becker's main motivation for writing the book. Instead, Becker aims "to show that the fear of death is a universal that unites data from several disciplines of the human sciences."<sup>7</sup> Becker finds in the fear of death a potential explanation for innumerable human phenomena. He thus views his book as "a study in harmonization of the Babel of views on man and on the human condition," and as "a synthesis that covers the best thought in many fields, from the human sciences to religion."<sup>8</sup>

*The Denial of Death* opens with an examination of heroism. Becker contends that "our central calling, our main task on this planet, is the heroic."<sup>9</sup> To be a hero, in Becker's view, is simply to stand out in some respect. Now, a human being always already stands out among other life-forms by virtue of his or her self-consciousness. There is a kind of baseline self-esteem that is afforded solely by the uniqueness of being human. Coupled with this baseline self-esteem is an inescapable narcissism, for one also possesses a completely unique "face and name."<sup>10</sup> One is number one in one's own mind, ready to "recreate the whole world out of ourselves even if no one else existed."<sup>11</sup> The first threat to our self-esteem, Becker explains, is the birth of a sibling who also sees him or herself as number one. The category, "second

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<sup>6</sup>Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973), xvii. I have chosen not to interrupt the flow of Becker or Lonergan's prose with bracketed inclusive language. Henceforth all Becker references are to *The Denial of Death*.

<sup>7</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, xvii.

<sup>8</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, xviii.

<sup>9</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 1.

<sup>10</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 69.

<sup>11</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 2.

best," appears the moment one's sibling is given a bigger piece of candy.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the spectre of more than one way of standing out also emerges here. It is crucial to note that Becker is not advancing an indictment of human beings, but a description of a tragic situation. He writes,

[I]t is not that children are vicious, selfish, or domineering. It is that they so openly express man's tragic destiny: he must desperately justify himself as an object of primary value in the universe; he must stand out, be a hero, make the biggest possible contribution to world life, show that he *counts* more than anything or anyone else.<sup>13</sup>

The urge to be a hero is something that few adults are likely to admit because of its intertwinement with narcissism. There exists a "terror of admitting what one is doing to earn his self-esteem."<sup>14</sup> Consequently, adults satiate the urge with pursuits that are less obviously heroic. The forms of concealed heroism are vast and vary from culture to culture. Becker explains,

It doesn't matter whether the cultural hero-system is frankly magical, religious, and primitive or secular, scientific, and civilized. It is still a mythical hero-system in which people serve in order to earn a feeling of primary value, of cosmic specialness, of ultimate usefulness to creation, of unshakable meaning. They earn this feeling by carving out a place in nature, by building an edifice that reflects human value: a temple, a cathedral, a totem pole, a skyscraper, a family that spans three generations. The hope and belief is that the things that man creates in society are of lasting worth and meaning, that they outlive or outshine death and decay, that man and his products count.<sup>15</sup>

Becker contends that there is a "crisis of heroism"<sup>16</sup> today because of "the disappearance of convincing dramas of heroic apotheosis of man."<sup>17</sup> Again, it is not only religious hero-systems that are found to be unconvincing, but

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<sup>12</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 3.

<sup>13</sup>Becker, 4 *The Denial of Death* (italics in the original).

<sup>14</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, *The Denial of Death*, 6.

<sup>15</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 5.

<sup>16</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 6.

<sup>17</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 190.



increasingly the secular alternatives of communism, consumerism, and scientism.<sup>18</sup>

Becker goes on to state that "heroism is first and foremost a reflex of the terror of death."<sup>19</sup> The terror or fear of death is therefore more basic than the urge to be a hero and in need of closer analysis. Against the environmental view of the genesis of the fear of death, which sees it as resulting from a depriving mother, Becker claims it is biologically innate. He concurs with the psychoanalyst Gregory Zilboorg that the fear of death is "an expression of the instinct of self-preservation, which functions as a constant drive to maintain life and to master the dangers that threaten life."<sup>20</sup> It is here that the meaning of the title, *The Denial of Death* becomes clear. Becker writes,

[T]he fear of death must be present behind all our normal functioning, in order for the organism to be armed toward self-preservation. But the fear of death cannot be present constantly in one's mental functioning, else the organism could not function.<sup>21</sup>

It would be debilitating to be constantly thinking about one's impending death, thus one's consciousness of it is repressed. However, like most repressions, it still influences one's behavior. One continually fights against one's impending death, even if one refuses to admit it. There is a double denial taking place here: denying death in one's behavior and denying that one is denying death in one's behavior. Disconcertingly, Becker writes, "[O]ne's whole life is a style or a scenario with which one tries to deny oblivion and to extend oneself beyond death in symbolic ways."<sup>22</sup> Becker gives several examples of such self-extension, and they range far beyond believing in an afterlife. He includes raising a child, constructing a monument, writing a book, winning a war, and spearheading an intellectual movement. Each of these is to some extent an "immortality-vehicle."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 7.

<sup>19</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 11.

<sup>20</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 16.

<sup>21</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 16.

<sup>22</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 104.

<sup>23</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 110. He elaborates, "[W]e must once again emphasize the basic motive of man, without which nothing vital can be understood – self-perpetuation. Man is divided into two distinct kinds of experience – physical and mental, or bodily and symbolic. The problem of self-perpetuation thus presents itself in two distinct forms. One, the body, is



Becker holds that the above reading of the human condition warrants a new view of psychological phenomena such as projection and rationalization: they are necessary for survival. As he puts it one place, "We can say that the essence of normality is the *refusal of reality*."<sup>24</sup> As he puts it in another place, "[L]ife is possible only with illusions."<sup>25</sup> The reality being refused is both the reality of the human condition, which he tackles in more detail later, and the reality of the world. Becker does not speak at length about the world, the whole realm of non-human things, but his view of it marks an important assumption in his work. He writes, "[A]n earthquake buries alive 70 thousand bodies in Peru. . . . [A] tidal wave washes over a quarter of a million in the Indian Ocean. Creation is a nightmare spectacular."<sup>26</sup>

Becker goes on to bring his study of the fear of death into contact with philosophy. He states that philosophers never found the essence of the human being, "something fixed in his nature, deep down, some special quality or substance," because "the essence of man is really his *paradoxical* nature, the fact that he is half animal and half symbolic."<sup>27</sup> It is important to be clear on the anthropology that Becker introduces here, for it radiates through the pages of *The Denial of Death*. He writes,

The person is both a self and a body, and from the beginning there is the confusion about where "he" really "is" – in the symbolic inner self or in the physical body. Each phenomenological realm is different. The inner self represents the freedom of thought, imagination, and the

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standardized and given; the other, the self, is personalized and achieved. How is man going to succeed himself, how is he going to leave behind a replica of himself or a part of himself to live on? Is he going to leave behind a replica of his body or of his spirit? If he procreates bodily he satisfies the problem of succession, but in a more or less standardized species form. Although he perpetuates himself in his offspring, who may resemble him and may carry some of his 'blood' and the mystical quality of his family ancestors, he may not feel that he is truly perpetuating his own inner self, his distinctive personality, his spirit, as it were. He wants to achieve something more than a mere animal succession. The distinctive human problem from time immemorial has been the need to spiritualize human life, to lift it onto a special immortal plane, beyond the cycles of life and death that characterize all other organisms (Becker, 231)."

<sup>24</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 178 (italics in the original). He elaborates, "Man must always imagine and believe in a 'second' reality or a better world than the one that is given him by nature (Becker, 188)."

<sup>25</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 189.

<sup>26</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 282-83.

<sup>27</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 25-26 (italics in the original).

infinite reach of symbolism. The body represents determinism and boundness.<sup>28</sup>

Human nature is paradoxical because the body and the self "can never be reconciled seamlessly."<sup>29</sup> The human being is pulled in two directions, as it were, and his or her awareness of this fact is what makes the human predicament especially tragic. Becker writes:

[M]an is a union of opposites, of self-consciousness and of physical body. Man emerged from the instinctive thoughtless action of the lower animals and came to reflect on his condition. He was given a consciousness of his individuality and his part-divinity in creation, the beauty and uniqueness of his face and name. At the same time he was given the consciousness of the terror of the world and of his own death and decay. This paradox is the really constant thing about man in all periods of history and society; it is thus the true "essence" of man, as [Erich] Fromm said.<sup>30</sup>

Human beings reside between animals and angels – and the ambiguities of this condition are what cause anxiety. Becker explains,

[A]nxiety . . . results from the human paradox that man is an animal who is conscious of his animal limitation. Anxiety is the result of the perception of the truth of one's condition. What does it mean to be a *self-conscious animal*? The idea is ludicrous, if it is not monstrous. It means to know that one is food for worms.<sup>31</sup>

It is crucial to note that Becker subsumes under "animal limitation" both being subject to death and to bodily functions. Regarding the former, Becker notes that an animal can stand idly while the animal next to it is killed because there is no knowledge of death until it happens. Human beings, in contrast, have full knowledge that death is impending. Repressing knowledge of one's impending death, and of one's animal characteristics, is

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<sup>28</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 41-42.

<sup>29</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 29.

<sup>30</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 68-69.

<sup>31</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 87 (italics in the original).

inevitable in Becker's view since "a full apprehension of man's condition would drive him insane."<sup>32</sup>

The most consistent or stretched out form of denying one's condition is one's life style. Becker refers to one's life style as "a vital lie," "a necessary and basic dishonesty about oneself and one's whole situation."<sup>33</sup> The dishonesty being referred to pertains to both uncontrollable aspects of creatureliness, as well as one's uncontrollable dependence on things external to oneself: "a god . . . a stronger person . . . the power of an all-absorbing activity, a passion, a dedication to a game."<sup>34</sup> Each of these maintains equanimity – that is, mental stability – and shields one from the danger of possibility.

Drawing on Søren Kierkegaard, Becker outlines some "styles of denying possibility, or the lies of character – which is the same thing."<sup>35</sup> In one style, the human being is "lulled by the daily routines of his society, content with the satisfactions that it offers him . . . the car, the shopping center, the two-week summer vacation."<sup>36</sup> These are "purely external men, playing successfully the standardized hero-game into which we happen to fall by accident, by family connection, by reflex patriotism," and so on.<sup>37</sup> Such persons are "inauthentic" in that they do not belong to themselves.<sup>38</sup> Another style is found in "the type of man who has great contempt for 'immediacy,' who tries to cultivate his interiority, base his pride on something deeper and inner, create a distance between himself and the average man."<sup>39</sup> These introspective persons appear to be facing their true condition, and thus authentic, but they are not. Despite carrying out self-reflection, these persons have not arrived at genuine self-knowledge; the attainment of it would be marked by a loss of equanimity, not a gain. There is a different kind of safety, but nevertheless a safety, that comes with cutting off the world – with not exploring who one might become through interaction with it.

<sup>32</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 27.

<sup>33</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 55 (italics in the original).

<sup>34</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 55.

<sup>35</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 73.

<sup>36</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 74.

<sup>37</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 82-83. He elaborates, "[A]s soon as a man lifts his nose from the ground and starts sniffing at eternal problems like life and death, the meaning of a rose or a star cluster – then he is in trouble" (Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 178).

<sup>38</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 73.

<sup>39</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 82.



With so much talk of the tragedy of the human predicament, one begins to wonder if there is any solution whatsoever. It is precisely at this moment that Becker offers at least the beginnings of a response to the human predicament. He writes:

The "healthy" person, the true individual, the self-realized soul, the "real" man, is the one who has *transcended* himself. How does one transcend himself; how does he open himself to new possibility? By realizing the truth of his situation, by dispelling the lie of his character, by breaking his spirit out of its conditioned prison.<sup>40</sup>

To be clear, dispelling the lie of character means giving up the traits or beliefs that are affording one equanimity. To carry this out is to discover one's "'authentic self': what we really are without sham, without disguise, without defenses against fear."<sup>41</sup> Suddenly, one stands unprotected, but also – and for the first time – open to possibility. Becker explains:

And so the arrival at new possibility, at new reality, by the destruction of the self through facing up to the anxiety of the terror of existence. The self must be destroyed, brought down to nothing, in order for self-transcendence to begin. Then the self can begin to relate itself to powers beyond itself.<sup>42</sup>

Greatest among the powers beyond oneself is "the Ultimate Power" or "infinite."<sup>43</sup> These terms are intentionally vague, for Becker does not wish to speak of God in any specificity. This becomes evident in his description of faith, which an authentic person must adopt in order to bear the burden of standing unprotected. He envisages faith as

the faith that one's very creatureliness has some meaning to a Creator; that despite one's true insignificance, weakness, death, one's existence has meaning in some ultimate sense because it exists within an eternal

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<sup>40</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 86 (indentation removed).

<sup>41</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 57. Becker is drawing from Frederick S. Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, ed. John O. Stevens (Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1969), 55-56.

<sup>42</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 89.

<sup>43</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 90.



and infinite scheme of things brought about and maintained to some kind of design by some creative force.<sup>44</sup>

Faith is thus a kind of basic trust in the face of futility. Faith does not fully overcome the anxiety that comes with being authentic; rather, it allows one to creatively manage anxiety. Facing up to anxiety through faith serves as "an eternal spring for growth into new dimensions of thought and trust,"<sup>45</sup> and as a means of curtailing one's manipulation of others.<sup>46</sup>

## 2. CONTACT WITH BERNARD LONERGAN'S *INSIGHT AND METHOD IN THEOLOGY*

I now turn to the task of comparing and contrasting Becker and Lonergan on some points of overlap. I will first examine points of overlap with *Insight*, then move on to points of overlap with *Method in Theology*.

Recall that for Becker, the body and the self cannot be reconciled seamlessly. The body, subject as it is to animal functions and death, perpetually gets in the way of the self's limit-defying aspirations. This view has at least some similarity to Lonergan's idea of the human being as a "unity-in-tension."<sup>47</sup> Surprisingly, in the same space where Lonergan invokes the term "unity-in-tension," he also speaks to animality and the threat of death. He writes:

Against the self-affirmation of a consciousness that at once is empirical, intellectual, and rational, there stands the native bewilderment of the existential subject, revolted by mere animality, unsure of his way through the maze of philosophies, trying to live without a known purpose, suffering despite an unmotivated will, threatened with inevitable death and, before death, with disease and even insanity. The peculiarity of these antitheses is not to be overlooked. They are not mere conflicting propositions. They are not pure logical alternatives, of which one is simply true and the other is utterly false. But in each

<sup>44</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 90.

<sup>45</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 92.

<sup>46</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 258.

<sup>47</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 5th ed., vol. 3 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 410.

case both the thesis and the antithesis have their ground in the concrete unity-in-tension that is man.<sup>48</sup>

*Insight* may be described, in part, as a map for navigating the maze of philosophies. The accuracy of the map is proven not by Lonergan, but by the reader him or herself. Lonergan specifies the conditions under which the proof of his map should appear, but it is up to the reader to actualize those conditions and judge whether or not Lonergan's map is accurate. The passage above implies that the conditions involve acknowledging one's mere animality and the threat of inevitable death. Like Becker, Lonergan views these phenomena as part of being human.<sup>49</sup> The difference is that Lonergan encourages the reader to bracket these phenomena so as to fall into the pure desire to know – or more specifically, into the intellectual pattern of experience. Lonergan acknowledges that “no one remains in it [the intellectual pattern of experience] permanently,” but one can remain in it long enough to achieve the self-affirmation of the knower.<sup>50</sup> In a way, the goal of *Insight* is to prompt the reader to discover “the self of our self-affirmation.”<sup>51</sup> Such a self has temporarily bracketed the biological pattern of experience; it is then that the limit-defying aspirations of the self can flourish. Lonergan elaborates{

For the self as perceiving and feeling, as enjoying and suffering, functions as an animal in an environment, as a self-attached and self-interested center within its own narrow world of stimuli and responses. But the same self as inquiring and reflecting, as conceiving intelligently and judging reasonably, is carried by its own higher spontaneity to quite a different mode of operation with the opposite attributes of detachment and disinterestedness. It is confronted with a universe of being in which

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<sup>48</sup>*Insight*, 410 (indentation removed).

<sup>49</sup>Lonergan writes, “If my intelligence and my reasonableness are to be thought more representative of me than my organic and psychic spontaneity, that is only in virtue of the higher integration that in fact my intelligence and reasonableness succeed in imposing on their underlying manifold, or proleptically, in virtue of the development in which the higher integration is to achieve a fuller measure of success. But no matter how full the success, the basic situation within the self is unchanged, for the perfection of the higher integration does not eliminate the integrated or modify the essential opposition between self-centeredness and detachment” (*Insight*, 499).

<sup>50</sup>*Insight*, 411.

<sup>51</sup>*Insight*, 411.

it finds itself, not the center of reference, but an object coordinated with other objects and, with them, subordinated to some destiny to be discovered or invented, approved or disdained, accepted or repudiated.<sup>52</sup>

For Becker, the self as inquiring, reflecting, and so on, is *also* self-attached and self-interested. Moreover, escaping the perception of oneself as the center of reference is impossible for Becker. Recall that he sees one's self-consciousness and personal uniqueness as generating an unavoidable narcissism. One cannot help but see oneself as number one, and because it is embarrassing to admit so much, one adopts self-esteem strategies that are less obviously self-centered. Such a process goes off without a hitch so long as one does not attend to what one is doing. When one becomes aware of just how many of one's words and deeds are shaped by the need for self-esteem, that is, when one obtains self-knowledge, the experience is so debilitating as to require faith to survive. For Lonergan, too, self-knowledge brings to light the various limitations one has placed on the dynamism of human consciousness, including "the individual bias of egoism."<sup>53</sup> The difference is that such a realization does not *require* faith as it does for Becker. In *Insight*, faith is not the result of an insight, but a potential to receive a gift. Faith, for Lonergan, involves "cooperation with God in solving man's problem of evil."<sup>54</sup> In contrast, Becker depicts faith as more of a personal decision that curtails evil inasmuch as it lessens one's equanimity-preserving exploitation of others.

Let me turn to comparing and contrasting Becker's and Lonergan's views on being authentic. As Lonergan does not invoke the term "authentic" in a technical way in *Insight*, it is necessary to appeal primarily to *Method in Theology*.<sup>55</sup> Lonergan contends that there is a process that moves causally from conversion to self-transcendence and from self-transcendence to

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<sup>52</sup>*Insight*, 498.

<sup>53</sup>*Insight*, 244. Note that Lonergan tackles repression head on in *Insight*, 215-16.

<sup>54</sup>*Insight*, 741.

<sup>55</sup>Genuineness can be seen as a synonym for authenticity in *Insight*. Lonergan writes: "So there emerges into consciousness a concrete apprehension of an obviously practicable and proximate ideal self; but along with it there also emerges the tension between limitation and transcendence; and it is no vague tension between limitation in general and transcendence in general, but an unwelcome invasion of consciousness by opposed apprehensions of oneself as one concretely is and as one concretely is to be. Genuineness is the admission of that tension into consciousness (*Insight*, 501-502; indentation removed)."



authenticity.<sup>56</sup> The usual order of conversion is religious, moral, intellectual.<sup>57</sup> I will address these conversions in reverse order. Intellectual conversion involves "the elimination of . . . [t]he myth . . . that knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there now to be looked at."<sup>58</sup> Inasmuch as one remains alert to this myth, there can regularly occur "the cognitional self-transcendence involved in the true judgment of fact."<sup>59</sup> Consistent self-transcendence of this sort constitutes one as authentic. As Lonergan puts it, "[A] man is his true self inasmuch as he is self-transcending."<sup>60</sup> Of course, there remain two other forms of conversion that play a role in being authentic, but I want to focus on cognitional self-transcendence for the moment.

Lonergan writes, "[R]eflection and judgment reach an absolute: through them we acknowledge what really is so, what is independent of us and our thinking."<sup>61</sup> This statement contrasts sharply with Becker's claim that projections, illusions, and the like are not only normal but integral to survival. To think in a way that is *not* deluded by anxiety-allaying beliefs, that is, to see oneself and one's world as they really are, is terrifying. Such is the reason why human beings typically avoid self-knowledge. Recall that Becker outlines styles by which human beings avoid self-knowledge and the range of threatening possibilities that it opens. One style is thoughtlessly adopting the hero-game into which one is born. Becker holds that such persons are inauthentic. There is a surprising degree of consonance here with Lonergan; he also laments "the behavior of the ready-made subject in his ready-made world"<sup>62</sup> and associates persons who fail to critically appropriate the tradition they are born into with "unauthenticity."<sup>63</sup> However, there is another style that Becker deems inauthentic – one that Lonergan himself seems party to: the introspective style. Although Lonergan distances himself from the term "introspection," the prominence of self-reflection and interiority in his enterprise approximates what Becker has in mind. Now, Becker would not

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<sup>56</sup>Robert M. Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by 'Conversion'?" public lecture delivered at the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, July 15, 2011.

<sup>57</sup>*Method in Theology*, 243.

<sup>58</sup>*Method in Theology*, 238.

<sup>59</sup>*Method in Theology*, 45.

<sup>60</sup>*Method in Theology*, 357.

<sup>61</sup>*Method in Theology*, 35.

<sup>62</sup>*Method in Theology*, 62.

<sup>63</sup>*Method in Theology*, 80.



label the fruit of the self-reflection that Lonergan advocates as genuine self-knowledge. The reason is that in plumbing the depths of the self as it really is, one will not find "a fixed base,"<sup>64</sup> to use Lonergan's words in *Insight*, but a frustrating paradox. The self is so riddled with dishonesties in its attempt to cope with this paradox that it must be destroyed before self-transcendence can begin. For Lonergan, there is merely a clearing away of the restrictions placed on what is essentially a correctly directed dynamism. When he describes the structured dynamism of human consciousness as "a rock on which one can build,"<sup>65</sup> he identifies a reliable foundation that can be sought out within the subject and, in a sense, taken refuge in. To the extent that this is a source of equanimity, it disqualifies the approach as yielding genuine self-knowledge, at least in Becker's view.

To stay with the topic of the introspective style for a moment, one might further ask whether Lonergan cuts off possibilities for the self. Although Lonergan promotes openness to revising one's knowledge in many domains, the self-affirmation of the knower remains insulated from a dialectical movement to a higher viewpoint.<sup>66</sup> Lonergan is therefore distinct from Becker in putting a limit on how the self might be conceived of.

Let me turn to the topic of moral conversion. Lonergan contends that moral conversion "changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfactions to values."<sup>67</sup> He elaborates, "In so far as one's decisions have their principal motives, not in the values at stake, but in a calculus of the pleasures and pains involved, one is failing in self-transcendence, in authentic human existence."<sup>68</sup> Lonergan also produces a scale of values: "vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious."<sup>69</sup> The critique that Becker would make here is that the latter four values are reducible, if one is truly honest, to vital values. For Becker, social, cultural, personal, and religious investments are efforts to maintain equanimity in the face of anxiety. Self-transcendence does not overcome this need for equanimity; it simply widens the range of coping options. Becker would disagree with Lonergan when he speaks of

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<sup>64</sup>*Insight*, 22 (italics in the original).

<sup>65</sup>*Method in Theology*, 20.

<sup>66</sup>Ronald H. McKinney, "Deconstructing Lonergan," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (1991): 86.

<sup>67</sup>*Method in Theology*, 240.

<sup>68</sup>*Method in Theology*, 50.

<sup>69</sup>*Method in Theology*, 31.

"the moral self-transcendence involved in the true judgment of value"<sup>70</sup> because he assumes that such a judgment can be expunged of "the bias of unconscious motivation."<sup>71</sup> In Becker's view, the urge to be a hero is so potent that even something like the enterprise of "intentionality analysis"<sup>72</sup> could contain a trace of self-extension, or at worst be a full-fledged immortality vehicle.

A final point of overlap between Becker and Lonergan regards religious conversion. Lonergan describes religious conversion as "total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations."<sup>73</sup> There is a parallel here with Becker's view of faith, which involves loosening personal reservations and surrendering oneself. The difference is that where Lonergan envisions self-surrender as being "in response to God's gift of his love,"<sup>74</sup> Becker depicts it as a response to a vague Ultimate. As he puts it in the closing sentence of *The Denial of Death*, "The most that any one of us can seem to do is to fashion something – an object or ourselves – and drop it into the confusion, make an offering of it, so to speak, to the life force."<sup>75</sup>

### 3. CONCLUSION

It is my hope that Becker's and Lonergan's conceptions of authenticity, self-transcendence, self-knowledge, human biology, and faith have come into better focus through the exercise of comparing and contrasting above. I believe the exercise pays homage to a shared element of their enterprises. Just as Lonergan promotes "[t]he possibility of contradictory contributions to a single goal,"<sup>76</sup> Becker endeavours "not to oppose and to demolish opposing views, but to include them in a larger theoretical structure."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>*Method in Theology*, 45.

<sup>71</sup>*Method in Theology*, 231.

<sup>72</sup>*Method in Theology*, 340.

<sup>73</sup>*Method in Theology*, 240.

<sup>74</sup>*Method in Theology*, 273.

<sup>75</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 285.

<sup>76</sup>*Insight*, 412.

<sup>77</sup>Becker, *The Denial of Death*, xix.

## THE UNASKABLE QUESTIONS

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THE LONERGANIAN THEORY OF OBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE pivots on the claim that all pertinent questions concerning a conditioned judgment can be asked so as to satisfy the conditions for making a genuinely rational judgment. If one lacks an unrestricted desire to know, one will not ask all of these questions. One then won't arrive at a virtually unconditioned with any confidence. But even with an unrestricted desire to know, just how confident should we be that all questions can arise for humans?

For Lonergan, to desire to know and to be able to ask the question are not significantly different. The only distinction is whether one can formulate the question. Herein lies the problem: the Lonerganian structure misses an important distinction between the desire to *know* and the ability to *inquire*, regardless of the ability to *formulate* our inquisitive tensions into questions. To emphasize: this distinction is not rooted in the ability to formulate the question. When I discuss a question, I do not mean the question as formulated in words but the tension of inquiry. By the ability to inquire, I mean the ability to advent the tension of inquiry. Each particular instance of this tension is resolved with a particular answer: it intends a particular content. But as a practical matter, to know that a question exists and intends a particular content does not imply an ability to have even a particularized pre-linguistic tension properly regarding that particular content. This will likely seem a rather bold assertion, but please bear with me.

In order to evince this distinction, it will be necessary to briefly review what Lonergan thought regarding the relationship of desires/questions and answers. We will then turn to the nature of human knowledge, noting that human knowledge is always particular and limited, and then to the nature of human questions, noting that human questions are shaped by the knowledge they intend and arise from our unrestricted desire only when we anticipate that knowledge exists to answer our questions. We will



further observe that our access to new questions depends upon our grasp of previous answers. So, if there are kinds of questions we cannot answer, there are kinds of knowledge we cannot have, and kinds of questions to which we have no access, questions we cannot ask. We will see that even if we cannot ask these questions, we can point out certain criteria for identification of valid, legitimate, yet inaccessible questions: (1) that they will be of a kind not currently answered by humans; (2) that they will arise based on answers we cannot get; (3) that we have reason to anticipate that the knowledge that these questions intend exists. Finally, we will consider the consequences of the existence of such questions.

### 1. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In *Insight*, the very first thing that Lonergan says about insight is that it "comes as a release to the tension of inquiry."<sup>1</sup> As we've already said, this tension of inquiry is what we're discussing with the word "question," and for Lonergan the case is no different. The source of these tensions, these questions, is, as Lonergan is quick to establish from the very beginning of the book, the pure desire to know:

Where does the "Why?" come from? What does it reveal or represent? Already we have had occasion to speak of the psychological tension that had its release in the joy of discovery. It is that tension, that drive, that desire to understand, that constitutes the primordial "Why?" . . . This primordial drive, then, is the pure question. It is prior to any insights, any concepts, any words; for insights, concepts, words have to do with answers, and before we look for answers we want them; such wanting is the pure question.<sup>2</sup>

The pure question or the pure desire to know is the guise under which Lonergan will address human questions through the first half of the book, through to chapter 12. The intervening chapters, while interesting and important in their own right, do little to directly advance Lonergan's

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), chap. 1, 29.

<sup>2</sup>*Insight*, 34.



understanding of the nature of the question, focusing instead on how questions are employed in the structure of human knowing. Chapter 11 makes a turn from that basic structure to discuss not what we know or how we know but who we are as knowing beings. Having affirmed that he is indeed a knower who knows in the way he's set out through the first ten chapters, Lonergan is left with some significant cleanup work to do (as well as a number of significant conclusions to make). He's employed a number of concepts that need further exposition and exploration, which would have been an inappropriate digression earlier in the work. Chapter 12 begins that work with an extended discussion of the notion of being.

But why does the notion of being matter to us here? In short, because this is how Lonergan establishes that the desire to know is unlimited, and because our strategy in establishing the existence of unaskable questions will be to seek the empty places into which their intended content would fit if it were accessible to humans. We must first look at the general nature of that intended content for Lonergan. He has a great deal more to say on the subject of being, but what follows is what he says about being as related to questions.

"Being, then, is the objective of the pure desire to know."<sup>3</sup> The pure question is a desire to know *something*. This desire is not merely for the *act* of knowing but is outwardly directed, seeking an intelligible content, and the intelligible content it grasps is being, or a part thereof. "Initially in each individual, the pure desire is a dynamic orientation to a totally unknown. As knowledge develops, the objective becomes less and less unknown, more and more known. At any time, the objective includes both all that is known and all that remains unknown. . ."<sup>4</sup> Because being was defined epistemically from the start, it is:

(1) all that is known, and (2) all that remains to be known. Again, since a complete increment of knowing occurs only in judgment, being is what is to be known by the totality of true judgment. What, one may ask, is that totality? It is the complete set of answers to the complete set of questions. What the answers are remains to be seen. What the questions are awaits their emergence. Meaningless or incoherent or illegitimate questions may be possible, but how they are to be defined

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<sup>3</sup>*Insight*, 372.

<sup>4</sup>*Insight*, 373.

is a further question. The affirmation in hand is that there exists a pure desire to know, an inquiring and critical spirit, that follows up questions with further questions, that heads for some objective which has been named being.<sup>5</sup>

The particular question, in short, targets being, or rather some piece of it, some element of the complete set by which Lonergan has defined being. Some questions target nothing and are unanswerable because what they seek is not part of that complete set. "Who is the present king of France?" for instance, is unanswerable because there is, at present, no king of France. Because the question seeks a non-existent content, it is meaningless or incoherent. But those particular questions which are not meaningless, incoherent, or illegitimate do target being, and it is through the pure desire to know that we differentiate between questions which target being and questions which do not. False questions are formulated, but the pure desire to know is prior to any formulation and does not itself target anything other than being.<sup>6</sup>

The notion of being is itself unlimited. Being is all-inclusive, "for at the root of all that can be affirmed, at the root of all that can be conceived, is the pure desire to know; and it is the pure desire, underlying all judgment and formulation, underlying all questioning and all desire to question, that defines its all-inclusive objective."<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, because the notion of being is unrestricted, Lonergan is in a position now to say that the pure desire which seeks and defines that being is also unrestricted. "Every doubt that the pure desire is unrestricted serves only to prove that it is unrestricted. If you ask whether X might not lie beyond its range, the fact that you ask proves that X lies within its range,"<sup>8</sup> assuming, of course, that your question is legitimate. The very thought of something included in being but outside the range of the pure desire to know is explicitly "incoherent."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>*Insight*, 374.

<sup>6</sup>*Insight*, 376.

<sup>7</sup>*Insight*, 375.

<sup>8</sup>*Insight*, 376.

<sup>9</sup>*Insight*, 376.

Therefore, every particular question either intends some part of being or is "meaningless, incoherent, illusory, illegitimate," or invalid.<sup>10</sup> The ability to question is, thus far, unlimited, and Lonergan uses this idea to great effect in driving the self-correcting nature of both his cognitional structure and his ethical structure. And as far as all this goes, there is no problem in particular.

But here Lonergan stops. Having said that illegitimate questions occur only in formulation and having affirmed that the range of the pure desire to know is unrestricted, he does not then inquire if the same can be said of our ability to access all particular questions even prior to formulation and even stipulating the restrictions imposed by proportionate being. He does not proceed, as we will, to examine the nature of the particular question and how it arises *as particular* from the pure and unrestricted general desire to know everything about everything. Of the three criteria mentioned above, the only one which matters in Lonergan's argument seems to be the last one: if we reasonably think intelligible content is there to be had, the question is valid; if the question is valid, it can be asked; if not, it should be ignored and our ability to ask it is moot.

Because of the great effect to which Lonergan uses his analysis of questions, the unrestricted desire to know, and their relationship to the unrestricted notion of being, valid but unaskable questions would form a significant stumbling block on the path to the complete set of answers to the complete set of questions. In examining how the particular question arises, the reasons to think that there are unaskable questions conforming to those three criteria should become clear.

## 2. ANTICIPATED AND LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

A question intends an intelligible content, and this content is an understanding which, when made objective through a virtually unconditioned judgment, is knowledge; this much we grant. But we will need, as did Lonergan, to say a few things about the nature of this knowledge before we can proceed to examine questions.

First, it must be clear that the knowledge we discuss is human, and human knowledge is restricted as to scope. Far from the everything-about-everything, the complete set of answers, the totality of true judgment

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<sup>10</sup>*Insight*, 376.



which our unrestricted desire seeks, human knowledge does not extend to all aspects of being. Lonergan will instead discuss the range of human knowledge as proportionate being: being proportionate to our humanity.<sup>11</sup> Because of this, there are questions we cannot answer, answers to which we have no access as part of proportionate being but which nonetheless exist as part of the whole of being. Lonergan discusses such things as the proper province of divine knowledge in chapter 19 of *Insight*.

Second, human knowledge is also restricted as to kind. We can know things (as opposed to situations) only superficially, and situations (as opposed to things) only in part. We never comprehensively grasp the unity-identity-whole in the data for any given thing because we never have all the data. The complete data set is there, but not every element of the set is available to us. Using what data we have, we learn to recognize, classify, and manipulate things, but we never completely understand the whole. Our body of knowledge grows, both in size (first restriction) and complexity (second restriction), but it never achieves universality.<sup>12</sup> Assembling an infinity one finite piece at a time is an impossible task within a finite timeframe.

For instance, it is accepted that, as a fundamental property of quantum systems, one cannot know both the position and momentum of a given particle past a certain degree of accuracy. This is not to say that such knowledge does not exist, merely that it is not attainable as human knowledge. Similarly, we will never understand all the complexities of every interpersonal situation. We cannot hope to comprehend a given person's history, much less the mental/emotional states and horizons of feeling another person occupies in a given place and time. Each of us has enough difficulty comprehending, much less mastering, his or her own! How much more difficult would it be then to discover another's in full detail when we cannot access their states and horizons even as readily as we can access ours? Again, though, this is not to say that a complete data set on another's mental states and feeling horizons does not exist, just that such a set is beyond human reach.

Third, the body of human knowledge is restricted by how it is assembled. This body of knowledge might be better addressed as a knowledge matrix. It grows in scope and complexity but does so in an ordered fashion. Each human of whatever age might be viewed as standing in the midst of a bubble. The surface of this bubble is not smooth but has jagged edges and

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<sup>11</sup>*Insight*, 416.

<sup>12</sup>*Insight*, 711.

points, much as a 3-D jigsaw puzzle. As we acquire more knowledge, as we achieve new insights and arrive at new reflective understandings and virtually unconditioned judgments, as we add to the knowledge matrix, new pieces are fitted into gaps in the structure of the puzzle and create new gaps by their presence and interaction with the other contours of the matrix.

This is an important thing to notice: human knowledge is gained piecemeal. It is broken up into bites small enough for humans to handle. Moreover, these fragmented bits of limited knowledge are obtained via limited questions. While our desire to know may indirectly intend a universal act of understanding, it directly intends only limited acts of understanding. We go about pursuing our unrestricted desire not by seeking a single great act but an infinitely large series of smaller ones. Our questions, as posed and even as they arise in us unformulated, directly and individually, intend only a limited intelligible content. Since the question is defined by the knowledge it intends, each question we ask is itself limited.

The clear retort is that the question arises from our desire to know – in this case, an unrestricted desire. The desire, though unrestricted, though intending a universal act of understanding, is made human in that it desires the knowledge piecemeal. Thus the particular questions are all specific facets of one universal question, one unrestricted desire to know. All the questions, all the tensions, are contained in this one universal tension of inquiry. While this is true, what we experience is a smaller question, a question about a particular thing. Within the cognitional structure, this may fall under the aegis of a larger conditioned judgment, in which case we ask this question in order to answer a larger one. But we do nevertheless intend only small pieces of knowledge with each question, and each question is tailored to the kind of knowledge it seeks. Were it not, it would seek some other piece of knowledge.

The other important feature to note is the way in which our questions arise in series, each one intending knowledge we do not have, the existence of which we anticipate on the basis of knowledge we do have. Our questions, while subordinate to the unrestricted desire to know and the tension of the universal inquiry, are nonetheless importantly distinguished by their particularity into a set of infinite and interrelated series. As we proceed through a given series of questions and answers, we build first a bump, then a protrusion, then a towering extrusion from our knowledge matrix. Most of us don't add evenly to our matrix, and these structures represent



our areas of expertise. Each, moreover, has connections with our other areas of expertise, sometimes tenuous, sometimes firm, spanning the gaps like bridges or skyways between skyscrapers. Each species of knowledge, each species of question, is its own structure, its own series, its own skyscraper.

Our ability to ask each question in each series is predicated upon having the content intended by previous questions in the series; attempting to build the top floor before the foundation or the middle levels is impossible. If the questions are particular and if they arise from answers to previous questions, then it may be that there are questions we cannot ask. This is not to say that such questions do not exist, nor even that they do not intend content within the bounds of proportionate being, just that they will not arise for humans due to the serial nature of our inquiries. We will have no basis on which to differentiate some particular questions from the universal tension of the unrestricted desire to know if there are questions prior in the series to which we cannot obtain answers. So the range of questions may be, as Lonergan says, unlimited, but our ability to question may not.

### 3. THE UNASKABLE QUESTIONS

Lonergan freely acknowledges that there are questions we cannot answer. As such, we must engage in a "critical survey" of all questions which can arise in order to proceed with those questions we can answer and set to one side those we can't. In this survey the argument must be couched factually rather than in terms of possibility, lest we encounter an infinite regression series.<sup>13</sup> To paraphrase Lonergan, the argument will always be that questions of a given species are possible if in fact questions of that species occur,<sup>14</sup> if humans have previously sought and obtained the species of knowledge that species of question intends.

To begin, it will be useful to look first for the shape of such questions as do occur. In doing so, the above statement that we anticipate the existence of the knowledge our questions intend (whether or not we anticipate such knowledge correctly – that uncertainty is why we ask the question) is one with a set of consequences that should be acknowledged.

The first consequence is the implication that knowledge *is*. It exists to

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<sup>13</sup>*Insight*, 662.

<sup>14</sup>*Insight*, 663.



be had, independent of our cognitive structure.<sup>15</sup> Knowledge is to be had through two genera of questions, yes/no (questions for reflection) or open ended (what is x?, questions for insight), in accordance with the cognitional structure. In the first genus, we ask simply whether a situation is so or whether something is. One can ask, for instance, whether unicorns exist – one may have seen drawings and cartoons, and so have a reason to think unicorns *might* exist, making the question legitimate, but one has never seen a real unicorn. Proceeding through the cognitional structure, one arrives at the virtually unconditioned judgment that no, in fact, unicorns do not exist.

The other genus of questions is more general, seeking understanding of a thing or situation. This is frequently addressed as or followed up with one or more questions of the first genus as conditions upon our final judgment. So, taking the instance of the unicorn, one might ask what a unicorn looks like. Does it have a horn, perhaps? Does it look in most respects like a horse? These questions are guided by pieces of knowledge previously integrated into the matrix: one may know, for instance, that illustrators frequently represent unicorns as horses with horns sprouting from their foreheads. Even so, these questions are, to borrow Lonergan's words, meaningless and illegitimate because we do not anticipate that the content they intend exists. There is, for us, no knowledge to be had of what unicorns are, outside of imagination, because we have come to the judgment (which we take to be virtually unconditioned) that there are no unicorns. There is no positive intelligible content to meet the inquiry. We could ask questions of speculation, but these are expressions of a desire (unrestricted or not) to speculate, not expressions of the unrestricted desire to know, and therefore fall outside the scope of this examination.

This leads to a significant conclusion: the only questions arising from the unrestricted desire to know are those questions which intend knowledge we have reason to anticipate exists. To say that one intends to acquire that which does not exist is an unintelligible statement unless paired with an act of creation, and knowing is not such an act because, as has already been said above, the intelligible content exists independent of human questioning.

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<sup>15</sup>This could create a small issue in that knowledge is a product of the rational mind and does not exist absent such a mind. Lonergan understands God as the unrestricted act of understanding, the being in which all knowledge (and thus all being) has been achieved. If we accept this, saying that knowledge exists independent of any human knowledge matrix does not raise problems about how that knowledge could exist – it exists first and foremost as known by God.

Any questions which intend a content known to be unintelligible are in principle speculative, and while they may be in some contexts useful, such questions are incapable of retrieving knowledge pieces to affix to the knowledge matrix. These are questions we cannot, in principle, answer with a virtually unconditioned judgment because their intended objects may be illusory. At the very least, we have no grounds for anticipating that such knowledge exists to be had or that the answers to such questions constitute knowledge. As such, these are not the questions we're looking for.

The second and more important consequence, already noted briefly above, is that access to questions requires previous answers. Using our knowledge matrix, we ask questions based on the shape of a hole or gap which we predict can be filled by the knowledge our questions intend. In order to find the shape of that hole or gap, we must look at the borders of the knowledge surrounding it. Consider the above question concerning the existence of unicorns. The content of that piece of knowledge (no, unicorns do not exist) is what was intended by the question, "Do unicorns exist?" One had to ask because one did not already know and the question arose because one considered what one already knew (that one has seen pictures of things called unicorns), but the inquiry intended a specific content concerning the existence of unicorns. There was a gap in the knowledge matrix which we knew concerned the existence of unicorns, and so we sought to fill that gap.

This holds true especially in human knowledge of the sciences. The scientific method requires a testable hypothesis based on observations and previous knowledge. That hypothesis is tested repeatedly and, if found to be accurate to available observations and test data, is considered to be a theory. There is very little, if any, settled knowledge in science, but humans tend to proceed as though there were (not that we have much option – life requires that we advance through it even without settled knowledge).<sup>16</sup> In so proceeding, a given scientist will arrive at a proposition which he affirms or suspects to be true and extrapolate to a new hypothesis using the shape of existing (presumed) knowledge and the way it fits together. This hypothesis may be accounted an insight, and the cognitional structure proceeds from there.

But the scientist importantly builds upon prior conclusions, whether of the veracity of propositions or of virtually unconditioned judgments

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<sup>16</sup>*Insight*, 711.



concerning past theories, in arriving at the hypothesis and could not do so absent a prior knowledge matrix. The scientist can frequently extrapolate the existence of knowledge two and three stages out, being able to consider the possible shapes of future pieces of knowledge and arrive at likelihoods concerning what knowledge may be available several layers of the matrix away (one might call this a developed discernment or intelligence guided by experience). This extrapolation ends in a conditioned judgment concerning the content of a piece of knowledge, and the intervening pieces are then conditions on that judgment.

The instance of the scientist also evinces one other item that should be here addressed: belief. With significant frequency, the conditions on our judgments are themselves other virtually unconditioned judgments of fact, but are of such complexity that we could not reasonably expect to arrive at them independently. We each have our areas of specialty, but the body of human knowledge in realms scientific, mathematical, and philosophical has grown so large that a true renaissance man is all but impossible in this day and age. So we must place our trust in one another and believe things we cannot ourselves prove, virtually unconditioned judgments at which we could not independently arrive.

Belief thus constructs a set of individual knowledge matrices into a social lattice of knowledge. One finds a place where his knowledge matrix aligns with another's, builds bridges between the structures of his knowledge matrix and that other's, and grafts the relevant portions of that other's knowledge matrix as his own. He does this where necessary and with multiple people, who do the same with him and with others. Each of us forms a node in the social lattice, bringing to it unique pieces of knowledge. When all is said and done, particularly in our information age, the social lattice is itself quite a complex organism.

Thus we can extend our knowledge considerably beyond what would be possible individually and can access questions that would otherwise be closed to us. This does raise the possibility that we would be able to access any question, given enough time. But this is not a conclusion merited at the moment. The critical survey here is concerned with particulars *species* of questions, not just with the particular questions themselves, and while it is not unreasonable to think that questions of such species as have arisen and been answered in the past will continue to arise and be answered in the future to the point of exhausting all such questions and answers given



sufficient time, there is no guarantee that the social lattice will give rise to all species of particular questions.

From what we have said so far, we can distill three features of questions humans can access: (1) since the argument is that questions of a *given species* are possible, these questions must intend knowledge of a species that has been attained by humans; (2) these questions arise from answers and knowledge we already have; (3) based on gaps in the existing social lattice, we have reason to anticipate that the knowledge such questions intend does exist.

From these three, we can then describe the criteria of the questions we cannot ask. First, since the argument is that questions of a *given species* are possible, these questions must intend knowledge of a species not yet attained by humans. As we observed, we have no reason to think that if we've asked and answered questions of a given species in the past, we will not be able to do so in the future. There may be questions of these species that we cannot access *now*; the questions we seek will be those we cannot access *ever*.

Second, because we can only ask questions based on answers we already have, these questions will arise from answers at least one layer of the knowledge matrix removed from the present surface. There is no reason to expect that we could not ask the first question in the series, particularly if that series branches off from another; bifurcation of the structures of the knowledge matrix is hardly uncommon and the value of interdisciplinary efforts in bridging the gaps and grafting disparate matrices into a unique and diverse social lattice to answer challenging questions is well recognized. We use such a mix of knowledge species to find questions we wouldn't otherwise ask. But to ask a question is not to answer it; to build the bridge is not to cross it and continue adding to the other side. These questions will be on the other side of such a bridge.

The third criterion is shared between the askable and the unaskable questions: based on gaps in the social lattice, we have to have reason to anticipate that the knowledge such questions intend does exist. For the askable questions, we have no reason to ask if we don't think there's something there to ask about; for the unaskable questions, this criterion is important to answer the challenge that the questions we're discussing are really illegitimate or invalid, that they aren't actually live questions because they don't intend an intelligible content. Lonergan has already dealt with those species of question; the species we're looking to evince are both legitimate, intending an intelligible content, and inaccessible to humans

even when that content is part of proportionate being.

In short, questions we cannot ask will meet three criteria: (1) since the argument is that questions of a *given species* are possible, these questions must intend knowledge of a species that has not been attained by humans; (2) such questions arise from answers and knowledge we cannot get; (3) based on gaps in the existing social lattice, we have reason to anticipate that the knowledge such questions intend exists as part of proportionate being.

To illustrate, consider, for instance, inquiring about the qualitative experience of birds living in a cage. This is a convenient example because we are confident that animals have experiences, because Lonergan acknowledges the existence of animal knowledge as a genus,<sup>17</sup> and because, as animals ourselves, animal knowledge is part of proportionate being. The "qualitative" modifier is important here because we do answer questions of science, questions which describe the quantitative aspects of the physical world and may conceivably lead one day to a complete understanding of the quantitative workings of the brain. The qualitative aspect, however, stands outside the realm of science. In particular, we know that birds have experiences and that those experiences have a qualitative aspect – those questions we can answer, that bridge we can build. But across the bridge, following on that knowledge is another question: what are the qualitative contents of those experiences? We can answer this objectively only with "I don't know." Having affirmatively answered that the experiences exist and have qualitative content, we reasonably anticipate that the content exists to be known, as do questions which would follow on that knowledge. This set of questions is inaccessible to humans. They meet (3) in that we reasonably anticipate that such questions exist, (2) in that the only objective answer we can give about the knowledge from which the questions would arise is "I don't know," and (1) in that we do not now objectively answer questions about the qualitative content of the avian mind (nor, for that matter, any other kind of qualitative xenonoetics) in any way other than "I don't know." We extrapolate that such knowledge exists, but more than that cannot be understood even far enough to give rise to particular content-intending pre-linguistic tensions.

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<sup>17</sup>Bernard Lonergan, "Cognitive Structure," in *Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, vol. 4 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 205-21 at 207.



To this example, three replies can be made, and the second two in particular can be made against any likely candidate for an unaskable species of question. First, this example may be vulnerable because we said that animal knowledge is part of proportionate being. The reply, then, is that animal knowledge is sublated into human knowledge. We understand animals' qualitative experiences because we are able to have the same set of experiences. Therefore, any questions which could arise from animal knowledge can arise for humans. While a reply of this kind will not always be suitable against possibly unaskable questions, it will apply in enough cases to warrant a response.

The reply is entirely valid as far as it goes, but it must be borne in mind that we experience these same things in a qualitatively different way, a rational way. We have experiences as rational entities, but animals do not.<sup>18</sup> The qualitative content of our experiences is different because of this, and so too will be the questions which can arise from it. Further inquiry into what the qualitative content of the animals' experiences would be turns quickly into questions of speculation because at a certain point we can no longer discern the shape of the questions to ask from the knowledge we have.

Another reply is that it remains possible to ask, "Is there anything beyond the answers I cannot get?" The answer to this question is frequently "yes," but to know that knowledge exists is neither to have that knowledge (that would be intended by a different particular question for intelligence) nor to have the tensions of inquiry it might inspire. One will quickly arrive at a point where the only objective answer to the question "Is there something beyond the answers I cannot get?" is "I don't know." As the particular questions become increasingly particular and narrowly focused, intending smaller and smaller pieces of knowledge, one will more frequently arrive at that point. The shape of the particular piece of knowledge intended is key: it molds the particular question to be asked. The particular question intending the particular piece of human-sized knowledge can be unavailable to humans even if the broader question, intending significantly more, remains available.

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<sup>18</sup>Some primates have been found to use tools and construct rudimentary villages, and limited communication has been achieved with some primates through the use of sign language and pictograms. This does not suggest that animals experience in the same way as humans but that there are further distinctions within the animal kingdom which we have not yet classified within epistemology. Such a project is not within the scope of this paper, though, and it is enough for our purposes here to say that the claim that animals do not experience the world as rational entities is *prima facie* reasonable as applied to at least some animals.



A third reply may be made focusing not on the existence of unaskable questions but on their impact on Lonergan's epistemological and ethical projects. The emphasis Lonergan places on our questions, on the unrestricted desire to know, is in service to his cognitional structure, where the ability to ask and answer further pertinent questions forms a lynch pin both in the structure's ability to reach objectivity and the reflection necessary to obviate sin. Emphasizing the qualification of pertinence, that we cannot know or ask questions based upon how animals experience life is not a problem in the slightest because such questions are unlikely ever to be pertinent.<sup>19</sup> A capacity to understand an analogous situation (how we would experience life, in the sensitive aspects at least, if we lived in the same situations as the animals with which we have contact) is not likely to have significant bearing on the situations in which we find ourselves.

While it is true, I suspect, that most such unaskable questions are unlikely to be of pertinence, some likely will be. For instance, there are questions flowing from the content of another person's horizon of feelings or the shape of their knowledge matrix at any given moment. These questions are pertinent to discovering the situation in which one proposes action (or inaction) in the course of an ethical inquiry but are unanswerable both because self-reporting is famously unreliable, leading to a corruption of the pieces of knowledge we could obtain on the point from the person in question, and because self-reporting is limited by the medium of speech as well as the horizon of feelings and knowledge matrix through which we, the receivers of this report, interpret it. Questions arising from the answers we can't get in such cases will remain beyond humans. We cannot ask all the further pertinent questions, cannot even evaluate their pertinence in some cases, because we have only limited knowledge of the internal situations of the persons involved.

So there exist unaskable questions. One may be able to evince other examples of such questions, but a great deal of the point is that we don't know what they are and have no access to them. It is enough for our purposes here to have illustrated the possibility of questions intending content concerning

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<sup>19</sup>I say this with the caveat that animal experiences are pertinent to ethical debates about our treatment of animals. I use animals as an example because it's a comparatively familiar instance of knowledge we can't get leading to questions that won't arise for us; this caveat may not be necessary with other more esoteric examples.

which we can only speculate and concerning which we will not, in practical terms, ever be able to do more.

#### 4. CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of this claim warrant consideration. They are likely to have a significant impact on the efficacy of the Lonerganian cognitional structure in arriving at objective knowledge (as opposed to an objective statement of "I don't know"), and thus on any Lonerganian system of ethics.

It is clear that Lonergan recognized the danger posed by unanswered questions:

The living is ever now, but the knowledge to guide living, the willingness to follow knowledge, the sensitive adaptation that vigorously and joyously executes the will's decisions, these belong to the future, and when the future is present, there will be beyond it a further future with steeper demands.<sup>20</sup>

One must be persuaded to gain knowledge of how to live, the willingness to follow that knowledge, and the capacity to understand the world. They do not exist inborn.<sup>21</sup> It is in this lag between the living and the knowledge to guide living that Lonergan finds the possibility of sin.<sup>22</sup> This lack of knowledge is fatal. "The reign of sin . . . is the priority of living" over all these other things.<sup>23</sup> The remedy for this is reflection, but none of us take the time to do as much reflection as we can, much less as much as would be necessary to come to a reflective understanding and virtually unconditioned judgment in every situation that presents itself to us as we live. In broader terms, we will tend to place bounds on our unrestricted desire to know and bias our reflections and judgments in all areas unless forced to devote the proper reflection. As a result, we will not seek all the further pertinent questions and will not arrive at a true virtually unconditioned, but will arrive at and embrace judgments which endorse our current practices. Were we being genuine, we would seek out the further pertinent questions with a passion.

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<sup>20</sup>*Insight*, 711.

<sup>21</sup>*Insight*, 713-14.

<sup>22</sup>*Insight*, 714-15.

<sup>23</sup>*Insight*, 715.

Moreover, the consequence of this moral impotence is not limited to the individual: "Now inasmuch as the courses of action that men choose reflect either their ignorance or their bad will or their ineffectual self-control, there results the social surd."<sup>24</sup> That is, society itself becomes irrational. Rather than improving our practices to match what we know to be right and true, we adjust our theories to match our existing practices. Each adjustment creates new pressures, new conflicts between theory and practice, and with each the social surd expands.

In the above terms, the knowledge matrix becomes corrupted when we attempt to graft on pieces of knowledge which we have not properly vetted, pieces of unknowledge, as it were, judgments we affirm in error. When we try to build on these flawed sectors, we can often come to conflicts in our knowledge structures, where no piece of knowledge fits properly against all sides of its intended hole.

In correcting these conflicts, the social lattice can often be helpful, pointing out to individuals where others have concluded differently. But as often as not, the social lattice can itself be corrupted by this phenomenon, when enough people fail to adequately reflect on things and situations. Great evils can arise in this way (slavery and genocide, for instance, arise when members of society fail to consider that others are human beings as well and are on that basis due the same respect and dignity as they themselves desire). Lesser evils also arise at a significant rate as a result of this.

The strength of Lonergan's cognitional structure is its ability for self-correction. It is on this capacity that his ethical structure depends: if we can reflect sufficiently, we can ultimately come to virtually unconditioned judgments concerning both our situations and the value of any actions we might take in those situations. This is possible because the genesis of the corruption is a failure to ask and answer all further pertinent questions, a failure to even be aware that they exist. Our patterns of experiencing and habits of pursuing questions train us away from such questions and we never even consider that they might exist. The solution, therefore, is to become aware of pertinent questions, to genuinely pursue them, and to accept the answers we find. In the course of the recursive process of probing our knowledge matrix for further questions to ask, we can find corrupted sectors and work to replace them with correct judgments.

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<sup>24</sup>*Insight*, 711.



If there are questions we cannot access concerning situations and things, this ability is substantially vitiated. If human beings are unable to ask, much less answer, all further pertinent questions, corruptions in the social lattice (and individual knowledge matrices) will persist. The end result of such a situation would be the continuation of Lonergan's social surd.

Now, it is reasonable to suppose that this is not an everyday occurrence. While one could carry the argument forward to say that in all cases there may be questions we cannot access, such is not necessary. It is not likely, for instance, that I have missed further pertinent questions on the judgment that gravity will hold me to the planet. There are thousands of such judgments operative in our daily lives, none of which are particularly likely to be affected by this conclusion.

The effects will be most apparent in moral and sociological situations, in the establishment and perpetuation of the social surd. A full exposition of the ethical and political consequences would require a full exposition of Lonergan's ethics and political theory, something well and truly beyond the scope of this essay. But we can point briefly toward where the difficulties will lie.

On a micro scale, it is likely that there are further pertinent questions that we will miss in any situation where we are called upon to make an ethical decision; this is almost unavoidable from the fact of human knowledge as limited in scope and complexity. Fully knowing the value of any action we might take as felt by another individual is all but impossible. But because the "right thing to do" in any given interpersonal situation is often heavily dependent on that felt value, it may be impossible to arrive at a virtually unconditioned with reference to any such action. This complication will plague us wherever even two people must act with reference to one another.

Add a third person, and complication increases. Add a fourth, and it increases further. As each new person is added to the mix, each new variable introduced into the equation, each new node into the social lattice, the complication increases factorially because each new element must interact with each of the others. The "right thing to do" can become lost amidst the chaos of unanswered, unanswerable, and unaskable questions. Long before reaching the political scale, no action will be a right action only – it will be in unequal measures right and wrong. The challenge of every politician (a challenge I don't envy them, however well or poorly I may think they meet it) is to construct actions on a societal scale which will be the right

thing to do both with and without reference to the values felt by observers of that action, including those impacted by the action, through balancing the measures in which various options are right against the measures in which they are wrong and choosing that action which is, on balance, the most right (or the least wrong).

But the wrongs snowball, over time. It is possible that, if we had access to the further pertinent questions about another person's horizon of feelings, about how they would feel the value of any given action, we would be able to construct our actions in such a way that the wrongs could be absolutely minimized or entirely eliminated. New possibilities, new ways of communicating about those possibilities, and so forth, might occur to us which could open doors to the resolution and rectification of the social surd. Instead, we are faced with a deepening surd perpetuated by our inability to properly understand even one other person, by our inability to answer questions about their horizon of feelings, and our inability to ask the further pertinent questions we would need to find to arrive at a virtually unconditioned.

I say these things not to prompt despair in the mind of the reader but to raise new questions. Regardless of what was said above, Lonergan's epistemology and ethics still have tremendous potential to bring us, if not to the truth, then considerably closer to it. But in following a method meant to help us transcend our self-imposed limitations through questions, we would be ill-served to ignore or deny questions about limitations on that method. These, we must pursue as diligently as any others, not to overthrow the method, but to better understand its true potential. We must cherish our questions, now and always.

## HUSSERL AND LONERGAN: EVIDENCE AND TRUTH

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IN CHAPTER 14 OF *INSIGHT*, Bernard Lonergan makes a brief but substantive comment on Husserlian phenomenology. He sets the context for that comment by saying, "The conflict between objectivity as extroversion and intelligence as knowledge has provided a fundamental theme in the unfolding of modern philosophy."<sup>1</sup> More specifically, Lonergan observes, "... once extroversion is questioned, it is only through man's reflective grasp of the unconditioned that the objectivity and validity of human knowing can be established."<sup>2</sup> The problem of establishing that objectivity and validity runs most basically through the history of modern philosophy, but remains unsolved. In particular, Lonergan notes: "For I do not think the E. Husserl's phenomenology does provide a solution. Scientific description can be no more than a preliminary to scientific explanation. But Husserl begins from relatedness-to-us, not to advance to the relatedness of terms to one another, but to mount to an abstract looking from which the looker and the looked-at have been dropped because of their because of their particularity and contingency."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, for Lonergan, "... the whole enterprise is under the shadow of the principle of immanence, and it fails to transcend the crippling influence of the extroversion that provides the model for the pure ego."<sup>4</sup>

One can readily understand that the way Husserl uses language in stating his own positions, especially perhaps his emphasis on "intuition" and his association of cognition with "seeing," strongly suggests a reading of

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 438.

<sup>2</sup>*Insight*, 439.

<sup>3</sup>*Insight*, 440.

<sup>4</sup>*Insight*, 440.



the sort represented by Lonergan's remarks. But does that reading present a fully adequate understanding of Husserl's fundamental positions regarding knowledge and objectivity? Might those positions, more fully discussed, lead to some questions concerning Lonergan's remarks about Husserl, and to the possibility that Husserl's phenomenology provides a productive resource for philosophers whose work follows from Lonergan's cognitional theory and epistemology? Might Lonergan's cognitional theory, in turn, be a resource that enables one to find, in transcendental phenomenology, an essential philosophical possibility that remained unrecognized and unacknowledged in Husserl's writings. I will try to consider aspects of those questions in this paper. That consideration should begin, I believe, with a focus on some of Husserl's remarks concerning evidence and truth in his later writings.

In the first of the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl says, "Evidence is, in an *extremely broad sense*, an 'experiencing' of something that is, and is thus; it is precisely a mental seeing of something itself."<sup>5</sup> This seems to confirm, in a specific way, Lonergan's more general assessment of Husserlian phenomenology. But another possibility comes into view when one turns to Husserl's remarks about the relations of evidence and judgment. For him, "Judging is meaning, and, as a rule, merely supposing – that such and such exists and has such determinations; the judgment (what is judged) is merely a supposed affair or complex of affairs: an affair, or state-of-affairs, as what is meant."<sup>6</sup> If I go into the kitchen in the morning and my wife says, "The street is covered with snow," I suppose that to be the case, and that if I were to look out the window I would see the snow-covered street. It is useful to note that entertaining a judgment "is not at all the same as having that judgment *objectively*: as a *theme*, and in particular, as a *judgment-substrate*. In judging we are *directed*, not to the judgment, but to the '*objects-about-which*' (the substrate objects) currently attended to, to the *predicates* (that is, the objectively determining moments) currently intended to, to the *relational complexes*; or, in causal judgments, we are directed to the *predicational affair-complexes* currently intended to as grounds, and the correlative predicational affair complexes, and so forth."<sup>7</sup> In entertaining the judgment mentioned

<sup>5</sup>Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), 12.

<sup>6</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 10.

<sup>7</sup>Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague:

above, my consciousness is directed not to the judgment itself, but to the snow-covered street. Moreover, this is so if I have looked out the window to see the street, or if I have not. I can intend a state of affairs in its presence, through a filled intention, or in its absence, through an empty intention.<sup>8</sup>

Due to just this circumstance, "There arise occasionally, even in every day judging, interests in cognizing in the pre-eminent sense: interests in assurative 'verification,' needs to convince oneself 'by the affairs themselves' of 'how they actually are.'"<sup>9</sup> Suppose, then, I do go to the window in my kitchen that faces the street, open the blinds, and see that the street is snow covered. Then I have the state-of-affairs as supposed and the state-of-affairs as directly present to me, and I have both of these together in one consciousness. I have brought about a transition from an empty to a filled intention, in which a move from a kind of absence to a kind of presence has occurred. "With this transition, there takes place here an *identifying coincidence*, between on the one hand, the objective affair (and ultimately the total judgment complex, the syntactically formed affair-complex, or state-of-affairs, that was already believed-in previously), and, on the other hand, the objective affair now given – as itself the fulfilling actuality – in the believing with evidence, the believing that fulfills the cognition aimed at with evidence, the believing that fulfills the intention aimed at cognition."<sup>10</sup> I have effected a successful verification.

Just as Husserl speaks of verification as an "identifying coincidence" in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, he speaks in *Cartesian Meditations* of a "synthesis" or of "evidently verifying" and "evidently nullifying syntheses."<sup>11</sup> "A merely supposing judging *becomes adjusted to the affairs*, the affair-complexes, themselves by conscious conversion into the corresponding evidence. This conversion is inherently characterized as the fulfilling of what was merely meant, a synthesis in which what was meant coincides and agrees with what is itself given; it is an evident possessing of what was previously meant at a distance from affairs."<sup>12</sup> Verification is the making-

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Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 112.

<sup>8</sup>See Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 33–41, for a discussion of empty and filled intentions and of being conscious of things in their presence or in their absence.

<sup>9</sup>Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 122.

<sup>10</sup>Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 123.

<sup>11</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 11, 56 and 57.

<sup>12</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 10–11.



evident of the truth of a judgment by bringing about the synthesis of a state of affairs as supposed and the same state of affairs in its self-givenness in the unity of one consciousness. Evidence, in the phenomenological sense, occurs just in a synthesis of this sort. Thus evidence is not just "data," and making-evident is not just "seeing" data, in the ordinary sense of the term. It proceeds from questioning and is the thoughtful process of bringing about the synthesis of a state of affairs in its self-givenness and the state of affairs as supposed.

Of course it is always possible to make a judgment not in the absence of but in the face of a state of affairs, in which situation the synthesis of the state of affairs as supposed and in its self-givenness comes about, as it were, all at once. It seems to me that an example that Lonergan gives in his discussion of reflective understanding in *Insight* illustrates this. "Suppose a man to return to his tidy home and to find the windows smashed, smoke in the air, and water on the floor. Suppose him to make the extremely restrained judgment of fact, 'Something happened.'" The question is, not whether he was right, but how he reached his affirmation."<sup>13</sup> Lonergan would say that, on the level of presentations, the man's memory of the house he left in the morning and situation he sees in the evening are the fulfilling conditions for the judgment in question, and that "The link between the conditioned and the fulfilling conditions is a structure immanent and operative within cognitional process."<sup>14</sup> Husserl would say that the man makes evident the truth of the judgment in articulating that judgment in the face of the state of affairs to which it pertains along with his simultaneous recollection of the house as remembered. To this extent there seems to be a strong similarity between Lonergan's account of the virtually unconditioned in relation to its fulfilling conditions and Husserl's account, in the discussion of judgment, of evidence and truth.

However the details of Husserl's account of evidence and truth in relation to judgment become clearer in his discussion of apodicticity. Briefly, adequacy and apodicticity are, for Husserl, two different perfections of evidence. Adequate evidence comes about in a complete experience of the state of affairs to which a judgment pertains, such that no intention directed at the object in question is empty rather than filled. Adequacy, when attained, delivers certainty, although as Husserl notes, "the question

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<sup>13</sup>*Insight*, 306-307.

<sup>14</sup>*Insight*, 307.



of whether adequate evidence does not necessarily lie at infinity may be left open." "An *apodictic* evidence, however, is not merely certainty of the affairs or affair complexes (states-of-affairs) evident in it; rather it discloses itself, to critical reflection, as having the signal peculiarity of being *at the same time the absolute unimagineness* (inconceivability) of their *non-being*, and thus excluding in advance every doubt as 'objectless,' empty. Furthermore, the evidence of that critical reflection likewise has the dignity of being apodictic, as does the evidence of the unimagineness of what is presented with apodictically evident certitude."<sup>15</sup> An apodictically certain judgment is a judgment that I know to be true and that evidently could not be otherwise. I know with certainty that my younger daughter graduated from law school and that I wrote my first book on a Mac. I also know that those states of affairs could have been otherwise. My daughter could have chosen not to attend law school; I could have written my book on a PC. I also know that I can perceive something like a cube only in its appearances to me in sides, aspects, and profiles, and that, while I know that you experience the world, I cannot experience your experience of the world. These states of affairs must be as they are and could not be otherwise.

One understands best the nature of apodictic evidence by contrasting it with evidence in a more general sense. Often enough, in a given phase of conscious experience, I am aware of something as given directly to me in such a way that, with respect of that phase of consciousness, I am certain of the being and identity of the object as it has become evident to me. The fire hydrant is red; there is a dog by the stream in the woods behind my house. But, notwithstanding what has become evident to me in a particular phase of consciousness, it is imaginable and conceivable that I might come to doubt the belief of which I am certain at the moment due to my ongoing experience. The fire hydrant turns out to be red on one side but yellow on the other. What I took to be a dog is really an oddly shaped tree stump. Indeed, even without the evidence of ongoing experience, I can at the moment, through critical reflection, be aware right now that the fire hydrant might not be red all over, or that the thing I am seeing might not really be a dog. These are the possibilities that apodictic evidence surpasses. In making it evident to myself that I can perceive something like a cube only through its appearances to me in sides, aspects and profiles, and that I know that you

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<sup>15</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 16.

experience the world and that I cannot experience your experience of the world, I also find there is no possibility of these matters being otherwise. It is evident to me that such a possibility is unimaginable and inconceivable. And through critical reflection on the evidence that is presently available to me, I discover that I am required to say that the evidence of ongoing experience can only confirm the certitude I presently maintain.

Husserl's understanding of apodicticity is quite subtle. I agree, for example, with John Drummond, who says that while of course apodicticity entails indubitability, "such indubitability does not entail incorrigibility."<sup>16</sup> The discovery of the distinction between adequate and apodictic evidence was, moreover, of enormous importance for Husserlian phenomenology for many reasons. My appeal to that distinction in this paper, however, is limited to a single issue. Husserl's discussion of apodicticity indicates the essential role that critical reflection plays in any and all phenomenological considerations of evidence. The nature and range of the evidence that operates in any instance of verifying a judgment must, in that instance, be the concern of critical reflection. Thus any affirmation follows from critical reflection, as does any denial or any assessment of a judgment as possibly true, probable, highly probable, improbable, or what have you. Assessments like these do not follow from extroversion, for just looking or seeing.

But still, is it not that case that phenomenological inquiry does begin from relatedness-to-us and does not advance to a consideration of terms in their relations to each other? Does that not follow from the role that Husserl assigns to description in the essential turn to "the things themselves" that phenomenology requires? Here again, I think there is a nuance in Husserl's position that one all too easily, and understandably, overlooks. And in this instance I think one finds a very helpful statement of this nuance in Lonergan's own writing. In chapter 11 of *Insight*, which deals with the "Self-Affirmation of the Knower," Lonergan presents a discussion of description and explanation that begins with the question, "Is the self-affirmation that has been outlined descriptive of the thing-for-us or explanatory of the thing-itself?"<sup>17</sup> In responding to this question he observes, "The distinction that was drawn earlier between description and explanation was couched in terms that sufficed to cover the difference in the fields of positive science. But

<sup>16</sup>John Drummond, *Husserlian Intentionality and Non-Foundational Realism: Noema and Object* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), 247.

<sup>17</sup>*Insight*, 357.



human science contains an element not to be found in other departments."<sup>18</sup> This is because human science "enjoys through consciousness an immediate access to man, and this access can be used in two manners."<sup>19</sup>

The first use is descriptive. One begins by noting and describing various features of insight. Then, given this initial description, one examines more closely the presentations that are prior to insight and understanding, and goes on to examine judgment and reflective understanding. From this follows an understanding of the relatedness of these components of the cognitional process to each other. Thus, "the initial procedure of description gradually yielded to definition by relation; and the defining relations obtained immediately between different kinds of cognitional state or act. But definition by this type of relation is explanatory, and so descriptive procedure was superseded by explanatory."<sup>20</sup>

I would suggest that phenomenological inquiry presents us with a situation in which a descriptive procedure, without ceasing to be descriptive, is superseded by explanatory accounts. I notice descriptively that a perceived object, taken as perceived, presents itself as a thing that appears to me through a manifold of different profiles. I give an account of the perceptual object by understanding that the thing that differs from its manifold appearances, and that in that sense might be said to be behind them, is not behind them but rather both differs from the appearances and presents itself in and through them in its integral identity. I notice descriptively that, in making a judgment, I am, in the first instance, focused thematically not on the judgment itself but on the state of affairs to which it pertains. I give an account of what a judgment is by understanding the relatedness between the different terms that are the state of affairs in its givenness to me and the state of affairs as supposed. I notice descriptively that I am conscious of you as someone who experiences the world and am also aware that I cannot experience your experience of the world. I give an account of the alterity of the other by understanding the relatedness of the different ways in which the other presents herself to me in my consciousness of her, as one who does experience the world and as one whose experience of the world cannot be experienced by me.

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<sup>18</sup>*Insight*, 357.

<sup>19</sup>*Insight*, 357.

<sup>20</sup>*Insight*, 358.



Husserl does not distinguish, in the way that Lonergan does, between the data of sense and the data of consciousness. But he does distinguish between the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude. Phenomenological inquiry has to do with such items as perceived things as perceived, remembered things as remembered, imagined things as imagined, judged states of affairs as judged, and with modes of consciousness such as perception, memory, imagination, and judging, and with the differences between and relations between modes of intentionality such as these. One detaches oneself from the natural attitude, from a spontaneous and unquestioning acceptance of the evidence of world belief, for the sake of disclosing the domain of phenomenological inquiry. I think it is most basically because of this that one can claim that, in phenomenological inquiry, descriptive procedure, precisely on account of its being descriptive of the domain of evidences that is the concern of phenomenology, has as its outcome explanatory accounts.

This is to say, among other things, that phenomenological inquiry follows upon and only upon the phenomenological reduction. It seems to me that working through the understandings of judgment, evidence, and truth that become possible in virtue of the reduction might lead one to consider modifying the assessment that Lonergan makes of Husserl in the citation with which this paper begins. It might also allow one to suggest ways in which transcendental phenomenology might be a productive resource for philosophers whose work follows from Lonergan's cognitional theory. I will suggest three possibilities in this regard. I emphasize that I mention these as suggested possibilities, no less but also no more. Their fruitfulness would need further work in order to be determined.

In the first place, some find difficulties in Lonergan's account of data or presentations in cognitional theory. Michael Baur, for example, asks, "For Lonergan, what role do data or presentations, as merely given, play in the intellectual process of verification or judgment?"<sup>21</sup> Baur believes that there is some lack of clarity in Lonergan's answer to this question. "At times, he seems to hold that the determinate 'whatness' of the given is available to the knowing subject merely as given, apart from any mediating activity of the intellect. Thus he seems to accept at least some version of the myth of the given. But at other times, he seems to argue strenuously against the

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<sup>21</sup>Michael Baur, "Kant, Lonergan, and Fichte on the Critique of Immediacy," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (March 2003): 91-112 at 101.

myth of the given in all of its possible forms."<sup>22</sup> Baur finds a specific example of the more general problem identified here in an example that Lonergan gives in the discussion of reflective understanding that I have already cited. When the man returns home in the evening and finds a scene of destruction rather than the tidy home he remembers leaving earlier in the day, he is working with two sets of data, one of which he identifies as present and one of which he identifies as past. "More specifically, Lonergan implies that the 'pastness' of one set of data (that is, its character of being *remembered*) and the 'presentness' of another set of data are simply given and incorrigible on the level of presentations."<sup>23</sup> Baur, however, cites several reasons that strongly count against this claim. If so, then "any actual determination that one set of data refers to the 'past' and that the other refers to the 'present' is not based on the given data alone, but is a *conclusion drawn* as a result of some minimal activity of questioning, understanding, interpreting, and/or judging."<sup>24</sup> But just as this view surpasses the myth of the given, it also renders problematic any "claim to know that there is some genuine 'otherness' beyond my current (or present) state of awareness that counts for me as an external limitation of constraint on my present state of awareness."<sup>25</sup>

Suppose that the problem Baur identifies does in some way belong to Lonergan's treatment of data or presentations in cognitional theory. If so, transcendental phenomenology might be able to help. Husserl would certainly not claim that "one set of data refers to the 'past' and that the other refers to the 'present'"; that is because it is not appropriate to speak of *referring* at all in discussing perceptual or memorial consciousness, at least in any standard sense of the term. But Husserl also would not allow that these temporal identifications are the result of "a *conclusion drawn* as a result of some minimal activity of questioning, understanding, interpreting, and/or judgment." The temporal identifications also do not involve an inference. He tries to discuss the issue related to the problem that Baur identifies by distinguishing, analyzing, and interrelating what it is for something to be perceived and to be remembered, as well as the differences and relations between perceiving and remembering.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately he does this against the

<sup>22</sup>Baur, "Kant, Lonergan, and Fichte on the Critique of Immediacy," 91-112 at 101.

<sup>23</sup>Baur, "Kant, Lonergan, and Fichte on the Critique of Immediacy," 102.

<sup>24</sup>Baur, "Kant, Lonergan, and Fichte on the Critique of Immediacy," 103.

<sup>25</sup>Baur, "Kant, Lonergan, and Fichte on the Critique of Immediacy," 104.

<sup>26</sup>In relation to these matters, one should consult the relevant sections of Edmund Husserl,



background of his theory of inner time consciousness. Without discussing the details of those analyses in this paper, I will simply suggest that they might present highly productive resources for addressing the problem just noted. Those analyses also develop against the background of Husserl's position that one finds, in the life of consciousness, a reciprocity between activity and spontaneity, rather than an opposition that would require that these terms exclude each other.<sup>27</sup> This position, I think, is an essential resource for addressing the most basic issue that Baur addresses in the article I have cited.

A second issue on which transcendental phenomenology may be a resources for philosophers who draw on Lonergan's texts is one that I have already discussed in another context in this paper, namely, the matter of judgment. Judgment, of course, is a concept central to Lonergan's account of reflective understanding or insight. One sees the problem that this account addresses by noting that, under ordinary circumstances, "we perform acts of reflective understanding, we know that we have grasped the sufficiency of the evidence for a judgment on which we have been deliberating, but without prolonged efforts at introspective analysis we could not say just what occurs in the reflective insight."<sup>28</sup> The account of what occurs appeals to the judgment as conditioned, its connection with its conditions, and the fulfillment of those conditions. "The function of reflective understanding is to meet the question for reflection by transforming the prospective judgment from the status of a conditioned to the status of a virtually unconditioned; and reflective understanding effects this transformation by grasping the conditions of the conditioned and their fulfillment."<sup>29</sup>

Husserl also takes great care in developing an understanding of the judgment itself, as well as the process or act through which I make evident the truth of a judgment, or its falsity, or its possibility, probability, dubitability, and so forth. In developing this account, he presents an

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*Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory*, trans. John B. Brough, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005).

<sup>27</sup>Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, ed. Ludwid Landgrebe, trans. James Churchill and Karl Ameriks, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 79. "The phenomenologically necessary concept of receptivity is in no way exclusively opposed to that of the *activity of the ego*, under which all acts proceeding in a specific way from the ego-pole are to be included. On the contrary, receptivity must be regarded as the lowest level of activity. The ego consents to what is coming and takes it in."

<sup>28</sup>*Insight*, 304.

<sup>29</sup>*Insight*, 305.



important understanding of the judgment itself by distinguishing a state of affairs as given from a state of affairs as supposed. As I have already indicated, a judgment is precisely a state of affairs as supposed. It is one way of intending a state of affairs, by considering it as something that I suppose or that someone supposes, rather than as something whose givenness I directly accept. In entertaining a judgment I am focused on the state of affairs itself, not on the judgment itself, and I am focusing on the state of affairs as supposed. If I turn my attention to the judgment itself, and if I am doing phenomenology, then I have an account of the judgment that is like the one I have just presented.

This way of talking about what it is for something to be a judgment plays a crucial role in the account of verification that Husserl gives. It is also of signal importance in helping one who is doing philosophy to avoid the otherwise unavoidable problems (I think at least) that arise in epistemology with the admission of any version of the theory of indirect realism, or that arise in an account of sense and reference like the one presented by Frege.<sup>30</sup> It may well be that transcendental phenomenology offers valuable resources to philosophers who are interested in matters concerning judgment and verification or in the problems just mentioned, and whose work draws on the resources Lonergan provides.

A third way in which transcendental phenomenology may fruitfully interact with the philosophical possibility that Lonergan opens has to do with Lonergan's comments about commonsense judgment and empirical science, and with Husserl's observations about science and the life-world. Lonergan is well aware of the issue that arises for many in the light of the deliverances of common sense and of science, as illustrated by Eddington's two tables. "One of them was brown with a smooth surface on four solid legs and pretty hard to move around. The other was a pack of electrons that you could not even imagine. Which of the two tables is the real table?"<sup>31</sup> Lonergan maintains that the question opposes common sense and science in a way that is ill advised. Rather, "our fundamental assertion is that the two regard distinct and separate fields. Common sense is concerned with things as related to us. Science is concerned with things as related among

<sup>30</sup>On this issue see Drummond, *Husserlian Intentionality and Non-Foundational Realism*, 171-231.

<sup>31</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on Insight*, vol. 5 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Elizabeth Morelli and Mark Morelli (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 10.

themselves. In principle, they cannot conflict, for if they speak about the same things, they do so from radically different viewpoints."<sup>32</sup> The difference between them comes about just because "it is necessary to distinguish within knowledge between separate yet complimentary domains."<sup>33</sup> The difference between these domains "appears not only in different criteria of the pertinence of further questions but also in the difference of the terms employed and the possibilities they respectively offer for logical deduction."<sup>34</sup> The complementarity obtains because "they are functionally related parts within a single knowledge of a single world. The intelligibility that science grasps comprehensively is the intelligibility of the concrete world with which common sense deals effectively. To regard them as rivals or competitors is a mistake, for essentially they are partners, and it is their successful cooperation that constitutes applied science and technology, that adds inventions to scientific discoveries, that supplements inventions with organizations, knowhow, and applied skills."<sup>35</sup> However, theorists of science can fail to recognize this complementarity. "Misled by a confusion between the heuristic and the representative functions of imagination, they assumed that the business of science was to paint a picture of the really real."<sup>36</sup> Of course, part of the problem here is supposing that one knows the really real by painting a picture at all. At its basis, the opposition between common sense and science "has no better basis than a mistaken theory; and it had best be written off as an error incidental to an age of transition."<sup>37</sup>

Husserl's discussions of science and the life world are in many ways predecessors of Lonergan's comments on empirical science and common sense. But in discussing science and the life-world Husserl forges an investigation that is unique to phenomenology. He analyzes the manner in which a scientific understanding of the world comes about on the basis of the life-world. He develops an understanding of the life-world itself that is complex and differentiated: it includes the world of things that is given to us in perception as nature, nature as well as the dimensions of culture that precede the achievements of science, and nature along with the dimensions

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<sup>32</sup>*Insight*, 318.

<sup>33</sup>*Insight*, 319.

<sup>34</sup>*Insight*, 321.

<sup>35</sup>*Insight*, 323.

<sup>36</sup>*Insight*, 323.

<sup>37</sup>*Insight*, 323.



of culture that include the achievements of science and that precede new scientific discoveries as well as the discoveries of new sciences. He shows that the life-world needs to be understood in these differentiated ways if one is to think appropriately about science and the life-world, which is among other things the world within which common sense takes form and operates. And he shows that the practicing scientist, no matter what theoretical assumptions she might entertain about the relation of the sciences to common sense and the life-world, must assume the validity of the evidence of world experience that comes on the scene and operates prior to scientific achievements. I think that these unique features of the phenomenological consideration of the relation between science and the life-world suggest that discussion as a productive resource for a philosopher developing an understanding of the relation of science and common sense that promotes the views that Lonergan presents.<sup>38</sup>

At this point, however, one should note that, just as Husserl may well provide valuable, even needed resources for philosophers whose work follows from Lonergan's achievements, Lonergan may well point the way to the realization of an essential philosophical possibility that, I would argue at least, belongs to phenomenology, but that is realized neither by Husserl himself nor by, with one or two exceptions, his followers in the phenomenological tradition.

All readers of Lonergan are familiar with the summary he gives of the positive content of *Insight* in the introduction to that work: "*Thoroughly understand what it is to understand and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but you will also possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening on all further developments of understanding.*"<sup>39</sup> One comes to "understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood" through developing an explicit metaphysics. Metaphysical reflection pertains to being. Being is "the objective of the pure desire to know."<sup>40</sup> The notion of being pertains "both to all that is known and all that remains unknown,"<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup>A most important text for Husserl's views on these matters is, of course, *The Crisis of European Sciences and transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), especially pages 3-98 and 343-379. The reader should be aware that Carr's translation is both excellent and not a complete translation of the text given in the standard German edition of Husserl's works.

<sup>39</sup>*Insight*, 22.

<sup>40</sup>*Insight*, 372.

<sup>41</sup>*Insight*, 373.



it is unrestricted, spontaneous, and all pervasive, and is susceptible to theoretical articulation.<sup>42</sup> While the notion of being is not definable in an ordinary sense, one can say that "it is determinate inasmuch as the structure of our knowing is determinate, and so it can be defined at a second remove by saying that it refers to all that can be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, with regard to knowing and the known, "if they are not an identity, at least they stand in some correspondence, and as the known is reached only through knowing, structural features of the one are bound to be reflected in the other."<sup>44</sup> Since being is the objective of the pure desire to know, and refers to all that can be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation, the structural features of knowing are bound to be reflected in the structural features of being.

In determining the subject matter of metaphysics in a more specific way, Lonergan says, it is useful to "introduce the notion of proportionate being. In its full sweep, being is whatever is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation. But being that is proportionate to human knowing is not only to be understood and affirmed but also is to be experienced. So proportionate being may be defined as whatever is to be known by human experience, intelligent grasp, and reasonable affirmation."<sup>45</sup> This, together with the aforementioned affirmation that the structural features of knowing are reflected in the structural features of being, provides the basis for saying that "explicit metaphysics is the conception, affirmation, and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being."<sup>46</sup> The implementation begins with an analysis that specifies the most basic elements of metaphysics, central and conjugate potency, form, and act. As the implementation moves forward, the question ultimately arises as to whether the metaphysical elements are "merely the structure in which proportionate being is known? Or are they the structure immanent in the reality of proportionate being?"<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>See *Insight*, 375-81; 388-98.

<sup>43</sup>*Insight*, 384.

<sup>44</sup>*Insight*, 138.

<sup>45</sup>*Insight*, 416.

<sup>46</sup>*Insight*, 416.

<sup>47</sup>*Insight*, 522-23.

This question, Lonergan observes, "has to do with the relation between being and reality."<sup>48</sup> Now of course one might hold that "intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, however useful or praiseworthy they might be, necessarily are extrinsic to knowing reality, for extroversion or introversion of consciousness is prior to asking questions and independent of answers to questions. Accordingly, by deserting the position on being and reverting to the counterposition, one can form a notion of the real to which intelligibility is extrinsic."<sup>49</sup> But the counterposition is that, and all counterpositions invite reversal, just because they are "incoherent with the activities of grasping them intelligently and affirming them reasonably."<sup>50</sup> If so, then one must understand the real as being, and "one must affirm the intrinsic intelligibility of being."<sup>51</sup>

A point of overwhelming importance, it seems to me, that runs through the chapters in *Insight* devoted to metaphysics, is the claim that an affirmation of the intrinsic intelligibility of being, and thus of the possibility and the necessity of metaphysics, is both required by and radicalizes the intellectual self-appropriation of the knower. Nor is the understanding of metaphysics that belongs to this claim disconnected from the tradition. Aquinas also holds that being is intrinsically intelligible, and Lonergan both appropriates the concepts of potency, form, and act, and would be perfectly capable of claiming, with Aquinas, that the subject matter of metaphysics is attained through the mode of abstraction that Aquinas calls *separatio* and that one rightly understands that subject matter as *ens commune*.<sup>52</sup> Very importantly, however, Lonergan forges whatever links he has with Aquinas as one who is speaking in an independent voice and as such putting forward philosophical claims. Others who do philosophy and read Lonergan need to understand this. And if one in this situation reads and also agrees with Lonergan in claiming that an affirmation of the intrinsic intelligibility of being, and thus of the possibility and necessity of metaphysics, understood at least along the lines that Lonergan suggests, is both required by and radicalizes the intellectual self-affirmation of the

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<sup>48</sup>*Insight*, 523.

<sup>49</sup>*Insight*, 523.

<sup>50</sup>*Insight*, 413.

<sup>51</sup>*Insight*, 523.

<sup>52</sup>See Thomas Aquinas, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, translated by Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986), 34-41, 51.



knower, then one must also say that a philosophy that falls short of this claim in its various aspects falls short in principle.

How might one assess transcendental phenomenology in this regard? Husserl sometimes uses the word "metaphysics." For example, in the fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations* he associates the word with the position that there is ultimately "a single, universal community" of co-existing, fully concrete transcendental egos, for which reason there can exist "*only one Objective world, only one Objective time, only one Objective Space, only one Objective nature.*"<sup>53</sup> This is enough to distinguish "metaphysics" from what Husserl means by "formal ontology," but it does not give us anything like a fully developed set of positions regarding the determinations that belong to beings as beings and the meaning of being. He very clearly insists that actuality is rationally intelligible.<sup>54</sup> He seems then to affirm a basic position that the self-appropriation of the knower requires and that lies at the heart of its radicalization. But he does not give us a metaphysics in the sense intended by Lonergan or by the metaphysical tradition that he partly appropriates.

Of course one might argue that Husserl cannot give us a metaphysics, in the sense just indicated. This would be on account of the nature of the phenomenological reduction itself. The reduction involves "bracketing" or detaching oneself from, setting aside, an otherwise natural and spontaneous belief regarding the reality of things that present themselves to us, for the sake of considering the intentional performances through which we allow things to present themselves to us as they do, and for the sake of considering those things just as then present themselves, just as intended. A philosophical consideration of beings as beings is disallowed by phenomenology from the start.

There are at least two responses to this claim. Heidegger gives one of them. He maintains that phenomenology realizes its ownmost possibilities only by reaching "the center of philosophy's problems;" that "*being is the sole and proper theme of philosophy,*" and that we are at all able to approach this theme only through recognizing "the *ontological difference* – the differentiation between being and beings."<sup>55</sup> Heidegger would argue that the understanding

<sup>53</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 140.

<sup>54</sup>See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), Part Four, "Reason and Actuality," 307-370.

<sup>55</sup>Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 3, 11, 17.



of phenomenology I mention above in relation to the reduction is a badly mistaken understanding of phenomenology with respect of its essential possibilities. But Heidegger also argues that an appropriate, thoughtful consideration of being involves an overcoming of, indeed a destruction of metaphysics. Metaphysics, as Heidegger understands the tradition, does not open the possibility of a consideration of the meaning of being but rather occludes that possibility, and thus must be overcome if philosophical thinking is to reach its sole and proper theme.

Robert Sokolowski represents, I believe, a kind of alternative to Heidegger. He makes the indisputable observation that phenomenology is concerned "not with the experiences and objects that I happen to have, but with the eidetically necessary structures of such experiences and objects, as they would have to be for any consciousness whatsoever. Phenomenology aims at discovering how things and mind have to be for disclosure to take place."<sup>56</sup> And he also says that since phenomenology addresses "the issues of truth and disclosure," it is "related to the classical study of being as being, the inquiry into how things manifest themselves."<sup>57</sup> Sokolowski expressly associates "the inquiry into how things manifest themselves" with the considerations of "the activity of knowing and with being as knowable" that Aristotle presents in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>58</sup> Sokolowski believes that phenomenology at its best recovers and in that sense preserves the metaphysical tradition, rather than leading to its overcoming or destruction.

I am very sympathetic to the position that Sokolowski holds out. But I want to suggest a different, although not unrelated, possibility. Early in the *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl observes that the phenomenological reduction, "this 'inhibiting' or 'putting out of play' of all positions taken to the already given Objective world, and in the first place, all existential positions (those concerning being, illusion possible being, being likely, probable etc.) . . . does not leave us confronting nothing. On the contrary we gain possession of something by it; and what we (or, to speak more precisely, what I, the one who is meditating) acquire by it is my pure living, with all the pure subjective processes making it up, and everything meant in them, purely as meant in them: the universe of 'phenomena' in the (particular and

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<sup>56</sup>Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 184.

<sup>57</sup>Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 145.

<sup>58</sup>Robert Sololowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 310.

also the wider) phenomenological sense."<sup>59</sup> This "universe of phenomena" includes "the entire Objective world" as it "exists for me, and precisely as it is for me." And that is because "Anything that belongs to the world, any spatio-temporal being, exists for me – that is to say, is accepted by me – in that I experience it, perceive it, remember it, think of it somehow, judge about it, value it desire it, or the like."<sup>60</sup> Later he says that "It must not be overlooked that the *eopché* with respect to all worldly being does not change the fact that the manifold *cogitationes* relating to what is worldly bear this relation *within themselves*, that, e.g., the perception of this table still is, as it was before, precisely a perception of this table."<sup>61</sup> A little later still he adds an important comment. "There is lacking neither, on the one side, the existence-positing (perceptual belief) in the mode of certainty, which is part of – normal – perceiving, nor, on the other side . . . the characteristic of simple 'factual existence.' The non-participating, the abstaining, of the Ego who has the phenomenological attitude, is *his* affair, not that of the perceiving he considers reflectively, nor that of the naturally perceiving Ego."<sup>62</sup>

The purpose of the reduction is not to leave out some things so we can examine other things. It is to detach ourselves from our otherwise natural, spontaneous, and otherwise unquestioned assumptions about things so that we can bring those things and the aforementioned assumptions into the focus of reflective consideration. The purpose of the phenomenological reduction is to allow me to turn my attention and reflective consideration to different modes of intentionality, and to the interrelated structures and possibilities that essentially belong to different modes of intentionality. Among those possibilities, Husserl mentions "existence positing" as well as "factual existence" as characteristics that belong to some intentional acts and to some things as they are intended by those acts. The reduction encourages one not to leave those possibilities out of consideration, but to detach oneself from them insofar as they operate as spontaneous assumptions just for the sake of focusing reflection on them.

In the text cited above, Husserl does associate existence positing with "perceptual belief" and "factual existence" with the perceived object as perceived. But Husserl is well aware that reflection on the being of things,

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<sup>59</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 20-21.

<sup>60</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 21.

<sup>61</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 33.

<sup>62</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 35.



and our knowledge concerning the being of things, has to do not only or primarily with perception but with judgment. At the beginning of the third of the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl says that up to this point in his text it had not mattered "whether the objects in question were truly existent or non-existent, or whether they were possible or impossible."<sup>63</sup> But these differences are not excluded from phenomenological inquiry. "On the contrary, under the broadly understood titles '*reason and unreason*, as correlative titles for being and non-being, they are an all embracing theme for phenomenology."<sup>64</sup> Phenomenological reflection has to do with different modes of intentional consciousness and with intentional objects taken just as intended. "The predicates *being and non-being*, and their modal variants, relate to the latter – accordingly, not to objects simpliciter but to the *objective sense*. The predicates *truth (correctness) and falsity*, albeit in a most extremely broad sense, relate to the former, to the particular *meaning or intending*. These predicates are not given ipso facto as phenomenological data . . . yet they have a 'phenomenological origin.'"<sup>65</sup> The table does not present itself to me as actual in the way it presents itself to me as brown, or made of wood. Nor does the judgment present itself to me as true or false, in the way that it presents itself to me as being a state of affairs as supposed or as expressing a propositional sense. But in verifying the judgment "the table is brown" I determine that the judgment is true and that something about the table actually is the case. I affirm a judgment on account of a synthesis that integrates a state of affairs as supposed with a state of affairs as given. Through this synthesis I make it evident to myself that the judgment is true and that the state of affairs obtains. Thus the predicates "being" and "truth" have, in this context, a phenomenological origin.

Husserl is very clear that actuality is a correlate of evident verification.<sup>66</sup> He observes that, "we can be sure something is actual only by a synthesis of evident verification, which presents rightful or true actuality. It is clear that truth or the true actuality of objects is to be obtained only through *evidence*, and that it is evidence alone by virtue of which an '*actually*' existing, true, rightly accepted object of any form *has sense for us* . . . and with all the

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<sup>63</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 56.

<sup>64</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 56.

<sup>65</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 56.

<sup>66</sup>This is a paraphrase of the title of #26 of *Cartesian Meditations*, 59.



determinations that for us belong to it under the title of its true nature."<sup>67</sup> This correlation of evident verification, or truth, with actuality, might remind us of Aristotle's association of being with being-true in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>68</sup> It might also remind us of the statement from Hilary of Poitiers that Aquinas cites with approval, to the effect that "the true is that which manifests and proclaims existence."<sup>69</sup> But what does "actuality" mean in the statement by Husserl just cited? As I suggest above, it seems to mean, "what is the case." If a judgment is true then the state of affairs that the judgment supposes obtains or is the case. It is true that, it is the case that, the table is there in the room, my father was born in the Netherlands, Spider Man's uncle Ben died,  $(a+b) = (b+a)$ , modus ponens is a valid argument form. Examples like these indicate that we can distinguish different ways in which a state of affairs can obtain or be the case. We can distinguish that which is intended as factually existent, that which is imagined, that which is past and remembered, that which is formally conceived (that is, logical and mathematical states of affairs), and so forth. We might want, in this context, to narrow our use of "actual" and to use it in association with matters like those that we take to be factually existent, as contrasted with states of affairs that are imaginary or ideal. But then we might ask if actuality is restricted to what is factually existent, if we mean by that material things in the world. After all, we do, or at least some of us do, speak of things such as God, or the human soul. In that sense at least such things are present to us in our consciousness as intentional objects, although that presence is blended with absence in a remarkable manner. And some of us seem to think that those items are, with respect of being actual, more like material things in the world than like imaginary or ideal states of affairs. But if they do exist, they are not material things in the world. And if they can exist, then the sense of "actuality," even though it is associated with material things in the world, is separable from the determinations that belong just and precisely to material things in the world. Indeed if one goes no further than to argue, as Aquinas and Aristotle do, that the notion of being is not a genus, one can perhaps argue additionally that the determinations that belong to actuality or being are

<sup>67</sup>Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 60.

<sup>68</sup>See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011a30, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard Mc Keon (New York: Random House, 1941), 761.

<sup>69</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *The Disputed Questions on Truth*, Q. I, a 1, trans. Robert Mulligan, (Chicago, Henry Regnery, 1952), 7.

separable from the determinations that belong just and precisely to material things. If so, then even the being or actuality of material things in the world is not properly understood just with regard to the determinations that belong to them just insofar as they are material things.

At this point inquiry has come, through phenomenology, to the boarder of metaphysics under at least one of its traditional conceptions. If one crosses that boarder, does one leave phenomenology behind. I leave that question to another day. The point here is simply that Lonergan very convincingly argues that affirming the intelligibility of being and the possibility and necessity of metaphysics is, certainly for a philosopher, a requirement for and a radicalization of the self-appropriation of the knower. If this possibility is not available for phenomenology, then in one essential philosophical way phenomenology falls short. I have tried to show that this possibility might be available for phenomenology, and that the sense "metaphysics" bears here is consistent with what Lonergan requires.

In *Method in Theology* Lonergan says, "Philosophy finds its proper data in intentional consciousness. Its primary function is to promote the self-appropriation that cuts to the root of philosophic differences and incomprehensions. It has further, secondary functions in distinguishing, relating, grounding the several realms of meaning and, no less, in grounding the methods of the sciences and so promoting their unification."<sup>70</sup> Husserl would applaud these statements. Where Lonergan speaks of self-appropriation Husserl would speak of self-responsibility, and these are not exactly the same. More importantly, the idea of intentionality is not simply identical in Lonergan and Husserl. The differences on this issue are very important and need exploration. Nonetheless, I have tried to show that there are important possibilities for dialogue between the philosophical possibilities that Husserl and Lonergan open for us. Philosophers who pursue one of these possibilities can, arguably in important ways, learn from the other. Understanding in more detailed ways how that can be the case would be, I would argue, an important advance on the current philosophical scene.

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<sup>70</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 95.

## APPROACHING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH GENERALIZED EMPIRICAL METHOD

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IMAGINE TWO WORLDS. IN THE FIRST, everyone speaks clearly and they distinguish their own wishes from the facts around them; they generally speak the truth and make no attempt to manipulate others. In such a world, *critical thinking* would not be necessary. In the second world, people speak the same language, but they are so unclear that you do not understand them anyway, and many in that world confuse wishes with facts. They often speak falsehoods, and some among them constantly attempt to manipulate you into some kind of action. What kind of world do you live in? If it is the second one, you may wish to think twice about what you commit to believe and to do.

Critical thinking is just that kind of "thinking twice." The goal in this paper is to reflect on why critical thinking might be useful, and then to identify some next steps that can be taken using it. To do this, four questions will be addressed: (1) What is so useful about critical thinking? (2) What is critical thinking anyway? (3) What are some consequences of taking critical thinking seriously? (4) What concrete steps can be taken to develop a habit of critical thinking?

### 1. WHAT IS SO USEFUL ABOUT CRITICAL THINKING?

Reflect on your own experience in the world and with the problems in it. Problems of all sorts seem to abound, as do opinions regarding how to solve them. Yet, problems are frequently not understood in the same way by different people, and the opinions expressed for resolving them are often contradictory. In addition, there is frequently social pressure exerted to get



us to agree with prefabricated opinions or to commit to actions flowing from them.

Those who are careless about their own thinking are not much help in the way of providing guidance here. Those who routinely deal in falsehoods cannot be trusted in any problem solving enterprise. Yet successful problem solving in many current contexts requires that we mindfully interact not only with a great variety of ideas but also with individuals who wield them with varying levels of ability.

Elsewhere, I have argued that critical thinking may be regarded as a vaccine against "cognitively transmitted diseases" such as unexamined vagueness, falsehood, untestable ideas, growth-defeating, and otherwise incoherent projects.<sup>1</sup> Each of these is widespread in everyday conversation, in print and electronic media, including in such common areas of human activity such as politics and advertising.

No matter what the research on critical thinking concludes, ultimately each person must decide for themselves about its potential usefulness. Is it valuable to be able to systematically sort through a variety of truth claims, approved values and recommended options? Or, does it make no real difference? For example, each must determine whether the labels "true" and "false" have any meaning for them. If they do not, they are left to drift in a sea of endless possibilities, with nothing settled. If these words do have meaning for them, they will be left with the challenge of seeking truth and the knowledge that comes with it, as difficult as that may be. Again, each person must find some way of sorting and prioritizing what is valuable in their own experience. If they do not, then, with many psychotics, they will value all things as equally important (or unimportant). If they do prioritize, their life will become an experiment in a definite scale of values. Finally, each must decide on courses of action. If they do not, the consequences of passive drifting will be real enough. If they do, the results are not guaranteed.

Therefore, one's basic attitude toward critical thinking will color one's attitudes towards self, others and the world.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Gallo, "Thinking Carefully about Critical Thinking," *The Lonergan Review* IV, no. 1 (2013): 154-80.

## 2. WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

Critical thinking is somehow related to "judgment," to "evidence" and "reasons," and to questions of the "reflective sort." In addition, critical thinking allows for the sifting through and evaluation of diverse opinions, claims and agendas. First, it is related to judgment. The word 'critical' derives from the Greek "krinein" (κρίνειν) "to judge." Second, it is also related to "evidence" and "reasons" – that is, to other knowledge of beliefs of which we are certain and which seem to recommend one choice or interpretation over its alternative. Third, it is related to questions of the reflective sort. Such questions take "yes" or "no" for answers because they invite an affirmation or denial of some kind: an affirmation of truth or its denial, an approval of some value or its disapproval, or a decision whether to act or not. Finally, critical thinking allows for the sifting through and evaluation of a large number of opinions, claims and agendas.

In the literature on critical thinking, a variety of definitions have been proposed, ranging from very wide to rather narrow. The wide definitions tend to include any form of thinking whatever, as long as it is done carefully and with locally determined "rigor." Among these could be listed any definitions that focus on thinking that is done *carefully*.<sup>2</sup> The narrow definitions focus on the activity of *judgment* and judgment-like activities, such as *decision making*. Illustrative of this would be Robert Ennis' classic formulation of critical thinking as "a process, the goal of which is to make reasonable decisions about what to believe and what to do."<sup>3</sup> Another example is Peter Facione's definition that focuses specifically on judgment.

"We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation and inference as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>L. S. Cromwell, *Teaching Critical Thinking in the Arts and the Humanities*. (Milwaukee, WI: Alverno Productions, 1986); J. Halonen, *Critical Thinking in Psychology* (Milwaukee, WI: Alverno Productions, 1995).

<sup>3</sup>Robert Ennis, *Critical Thinking*. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996), xvii.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Facione, *What Is Critical Thinking?* (Millbrae, CA: Insight Press, 2006).

On this account, critical thinking involves *judgment* – a personal commitment or affirmation of some kind. Moreover, this judgment meets a specific *purpose*. In addition, this judgment involves the application of *criteria* to concepts, evidence and contexts in order to reach a resolution of some kind.

The work of philosopher Bernard Lonergan is directly relevant to explorations of critical thinking because of the central role that judgment and decision play in the acquisition of knowledge and the development of persons. In fact, his work represents a dramatic “turn to the concrete” with regard to important facts of consciousness. Lonergan puts it this way: “The aim is not to set forth a list of abstract properties of human knowledge but to assist in . . . effecting a personal appropriation of the concrete, dynamic structure immanent in and recurrently operative in . . . cognitional activities.”<sup>5</sup>

That “concrete dynamic structure of cognitional activities” includes a limited set of important *facts of consciousness*. Among those facts of consciousness are: insight, questions, judgment and decision. I take it for granted that we all have insights, ask questions, and make judgments and decisions. The reader is invited to reflect on each of these facts in sequence.

First, we have insights. But what is that? Richard Mayer defines it as a transition in consciousness “by which a problem solver suddenly moves from a state of not knowing how to solve a problem to a state of knowing how to solve it.”<sup>6</sup> For Lonergan, insights have five characteristics: (1) they come suddenly and unexpectedly; (2) they integrate a collection of data; (3) they come as a release to the tension of inquiry; (4) they pivot between the concrete and abstract; and (5) they pass into the habitual structure of the mind.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the event of insight may be said to have two additional characteristics: (6) it is fleeting (unless recorded); and (7) it is not under our personal control, although we can set up conditions to statistically favor its occurrence.

Questions represent a second set of conscious events. I am not discussing here a general sense of wonder or specifically the desire to know. I am referring to specific and purposeful conscious events that occur at specific

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<sup>5</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), preface.

<sup>6</sup>Richard Mayer, *Thinking, Problem Solving, Cognition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Freeman, 1992).

<sup>7</sup>*Insight*, chap. 1.



times. What can be said about them? A number of distinctions may prove useful. (1) One can distinguish *authentic* vs. *inauthentic* questions. Authentic questions are motivated by and express the desire to know; inauthentic questions are not so motivated. (2) *Formulated questions* can be distinguished from *unformulated questions*. Formulated questions are those we are familiar with as expressed in language. An unformulated question can be defined as the recognition of a gap in our understanding, knowledge, or practice.<sup>8</sup> That recognition may be difficult to “put one’s finger on,” that is, to formulate in language. (3) Among the formulated questions, linguists distinguish the *wh-questions* (who, what, when, where, why, how, and so forth) from *yes-no questions*.<sup>9</sup> The *wh-questions* pertain to the *understanding* area of consciousness, whereas the *yes-no questions* function in the *judging* and *deciding* areas. (4) The unformulated question, as an act of recognition, may have many of the same basic traits of insight.

Thirdly, there is the fact of judgment. This is a topic that is not fashionable in many postmodern contexts, largely because it seems to be confused with poor uses of judgment. As discussed here, judgment will not be equated with blaming or condemning persons. It is also not to be identified with rash judgment or being judgmental. Instead, *judgment* is simply an answer to a *reflective question of fact* or to a *reflective question of value*. In the attempt to resolve issues of fact, guiding questions may include, for example, “Is this true?” “Does that work?” “Does X exist?” In the attempt to resolve issues of value, guiding questions may include, among others, “Is that valuable?” and “Is this good?”

The next fact of consciousness is the fact of decision. *Decision* is an answer to a *reflective deliberative question*. This kind of guiding question always takes the first person form: “Should I do this?” “Ought we to do that?” Moreover, they always invite reflection on some proposed course of action.

These four facts occur within the context of different kinds of consciousness and they are distributed in distinct ways. Generalized empirical method (GEM), which is familiar to many Lonergan scholars, may be described as an elucidation of various kinds or “levels” of consciousness that are inter-related, yet functionally distinct. These levels of consciousness

<sup>8</sup>Richard Grallo, “Questioning as a Cognitive Process: Implications for Learning and Culture.” *Symposium XVI*, no. 1 (2009): 13-23.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Kroeger, *Analysing Grammar: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203ff.

result both in the acquisition of knowledge and, to the extent that knowledge changes a person, in the development of persons. Moreover, if these levels of *experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding* are fully understood, there will result in the acquisition of greater self-knowledge. In many accounts, there are four such "levels"; yet in succeeding years, there has been some debate about whether there are four or five levels of consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

Both here and elsewhere, I reframe GEM into general intentional structure [GIS].<sup>11</sup> (See Figure1.) General intentional structure incorporates a number of changes. (1) It refers to "areas of conscious functioning," which may or may not function as "levels." There is no deterministic movement from one area to another. Each can be related to the other through *sublation*, as Lonergan described.<sup>12</sup> In sublation the activities and functions of one area complement and go beyond the activities and functions of other areas. However, it is a question of fact as to whether or not that occurs in any specific person at any given time. (2) GIS emphasizes the distinction between *judgments of fact* and *judgments of value* (thereby splitting judging into judging or resolving facts and judging or sorting values). Resolving facts addresses reflective guiding questions of the general form: "Is P true?" where P may be any proposition. (3) GIS distinguishes *judging values* from *deciding* based on the guiding question each addresses. *Judging value* addresses reflective questions of the general form: "Is Y worthwhile?" where Y may be anything. *Deciding* is an area that when carried through to completion in action results in a transformation of situations, and through this, a transformation of self.<sup>13</sup> This area of consciousness addresses deliberative first-person guiding questions of the form: "Should I (or we) do Z?" where Z is a proposed course of action.

This overall reframing of GEM is consonant with the view of five (not four) areas of conscious functioning, with their being possibly related through sublation and with the five transcendental precepts as formulated by Lonergan: Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible, Be

<sup>10</sup>Brian Cronin, *Foundations of Philosophy: Lonergan's Cognitive Theory and Epistemology* (Nairobi, Kenya: Consolata Institute of Philosophy, 1999); Patrick Byrne, "Consciousness: Levels, Sublations and the Subject as Subject." *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13, no. 2 (2005): 131-50; Michael Vertin, "Lonergan on Consciousness: Is There a Fifth Level?" *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12, no.1 (1994): 1-36; Michael Vertin, "Acceptance and Actualization: Two Phases of My Human Living?" *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 21, no.1 (2003): 67-86.

<sup>11</sup>Grallo, "Thinking Carefully about Critical Thinking," especially 163.

<sup>12</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972). 316, 340.

<sup>13</sup>Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).

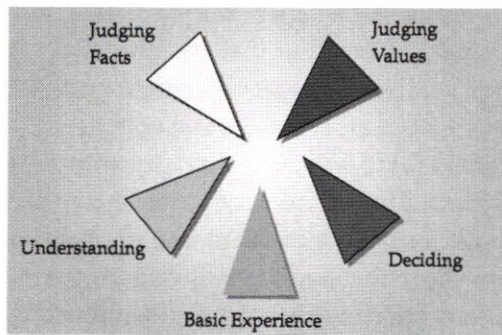


in love.<sup>14</sup> Just how these precepts can be carried out in concrete contexts is another question and will not be addressed here.

For Lonergan, these functionally distinct areas of consciousness provided the outline and ground of a general method, applicable across disciplines. From a psychological point of view, these functionally distinct areas of consciousness also provide the outline and ground of a unified theory of both consciousness and complex human problem solving.<sup>15</sup>

Critical thinking as I have described it pertains to three of the five areas of consciousness identified in Figure 1.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, critical thinking can be regarded as existing in three varieties: *factual critical thinking*, *value-oriented critical thinking*, and *deliberative critical thinking*. Factual critical thinking refers specifically to all the acts and operations of the area of consciousness referred to as *judging facts*. Value-oriented critical thinking refers specifically to all the acts and operations of the area of consciousness referred to as *judging values*. Deliberative critical thinking refers specifically to all the acts and operations of the area of consciousness referred to as *deciding*. All aim to somehow "get things right," but what exactly that means is determined by the guiding question in the conscious area. What I mean by an "act" is an instantaneous mental event such as the occurrence of an insight; and an "operation" is a more discursive sequence occurring over time, transforming some input into an endproduct, such as weighing evidence.

FIGURE 1. GENERALIZED EMPIRICAL METHOD REFRAMED AS  
GENERAL INTENTIONAL STRUCTURE



<sup>14</sup>*Method in Theology*, chap. 7.

<sup>15</sup>On a unified theory of consciousness: Mark Morelli, "Lonergan's Unified Theory of Consciousness" *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 17, no. 1 (1999): 171-88.

<sup>16</sup>Grallo, "Thinking Carefully about Critical Thinking," 163.



As illustrative of what can appear in each of these areas consider a specific judgment of fact. Suppose that one arrives at work on a Monday morning to find that desks have been moved around, coworkers are speaking in hushed tones, and police officers are present throughout the building. A rather modest judgment might be that "Something unusual has happened." If this judgment is well-founded, then the elements depicted in Figure 2 can be expected to be present. For example, "evidence" is provided by data of sense as well as by representations of memory such that the scene at the office today does not resemble that of last week. In addition, there is the often implicit reflective question of fact which asks: "Has something significant happened here at the office?" Also, frequently implicit, is the rule (or criterion) that if the scene at the office differs in a marked way from previous versions of the office scene, then something significant has happened there. The judgment of fact itself is an answer to the reflective question of fact. Yet all of this does not automatically occur, and it does not mechanically come together. That function is performed by a reflective insight that grasps the interconnection between the guiding question, the evidence, and the criterion for weighing the evidence. If the evidence is understood as being sufficient to answer the question in light of the criterion, then a consonant answer (or judgment of fact) is warranted. It is the reflective factual insight that pulls all of this together. Yet insights, of any kind, are not under our control. That is why some persons can be presented with incontrovertible evidence for a particular judgment and still "not get it." Presenting an airtight argument is no guarantee of the reflective insight, or of the resulting personal affirmation that is the judgment of fact. Moreover, the personal affirmation that constitutes the judgment of fact puts one on the spot. It is a basic personal commitment, which, if expressed publicly, may have consequences that are rather large.

What has been said about *judgments of fact* can be transposed to *judgments of value* and to *decisions*. The depiction of judgments of fact in Figure 2 can be modified for both judgments of value and for decisions. All three end products have a similar structure of cognitive acts, operations and events, guided by a distinctive reflective question and terminating in a judgment or decision that reflects increasing levels of personal commitment, and often increasing levels of anxiety. In each case, if one is attempting to think things through by means of these cognitive acts, operations and events, then one is attempting to "get things right" – that is, to take criteria for truth, value, and

constructive change seriously.

Getting things right also means "minimizing errors." Consider again the case of the modest judgment of fact: "Something has happened at the office." The "Judgment Matrix" of Figure 3 depicts four possible outcomes associated with our prospective judgment about some proposition (P). The matrix is divided into four quarants, each representing a distinct outcome situation. In two situations (or quadrants A and D) one has made a correct judgment of fact that corresponds to the situation at the office. The proposition P is true and we correctly judge it so (A), or, it is false and we judge it so (D). In contrast, situations (B) and (C) present two basic kinds of errors. In situation (B), we judge a proposition (P) to be true, when in fact it is not. This is an *error of hallucination*, or in statistics it is referred to as a "Type I error." In situation (C), we judge (P) to be false, when in fact it is true. This is an *error of blindness*, or in statistics it is referred to as a "Type II error." Depending on the details of the local situation, each type of error can, if acted upon, lead to very serious consequences. This is frequently the case, for example, in various medical specialties.

FIGURE 2.

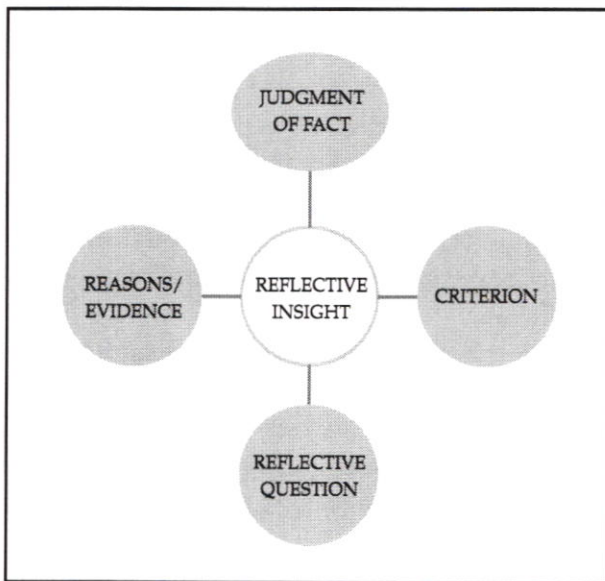


FIGURE 3. "JUDGMENT MATRIX" FOR A JUDGMENT OF FACT

	P is true	P is not true
J [P is true]	(A) Correct	(B) False positive
J [P is not true]	(C) False negative	(D) Correct

The depiction of Figure 3 for judgments of fact can be modified for both judgments of value and for decisions. All three end products have a similar structure of correct and erroneous outcomes.<sup>17</sup> In each case, if one is attempting to think things through and to "get things right," then one is attempting to minimize the errors of hallucination and blindness – something that is no easy matter.

### 3. WHAT ARE SOME CONSEQUENCES OF TAKING CRITICAL THINKING SERIOUSLY?

One way to examine the value of any activity is to examine where it may lead, either in terms of new knowledge or new experiences. This is equally true for critical thinking. What follows is an incomplete account of both the implications and effects of taking critical thinking seriously.

If the account of critical thinking that has been presented here and elsewhere<sup>18</sup> is accurate, then a number of implications follow. First, each type of critical thinking is a distinct cognitive process. Second, it takes time to think critically and well. Third, the processes of critical thinking can be disturbed. Fourth, in the processes of critical thinking, not everything is in our control. Fifth, it is possible to confuse the different types of critical thinking. Finally, critical thinking can be voluntarily suspended at any time, for any amount of time.

First, *each type of critical thinking is a distinct cognitive process*. A cognitive process can be regarded as a collection of distinct mental acts and operations. But as described, each type of critical thinking involves a number of mental acts and operations such as guiding reflective questions, collecting reasons or evidence, weighing reasons or evidence, reflective insights, and

<sup>17</sup>Grallo, "Thinking Carefully about Critical Thinking," 159-64.

<sup>18</sup>Grallo, "Thinking Carefully about Critical Thinking."



a terminating event of judgment or decision. Therefore, they constitute a cognitive process. Moreover, because the guiding questions are different and the terminal events of judgment or decision are different, the processes are distinct.

Second, *it takes time to think critically and well*. It will take time for the various components of critical thinking to emerge or to be practiced. For example, one cannot accurately predict when any insight will occur. Another example, collecting evidence and reasons is normally a protracted operation extended over time. Furthermore, many of the component activities can be done poorly or done well. Therefore, it takes time to think critically and well.

Third, *the processes of critical thinking can be disturbed*. Because critical thinking involves distinct acts and operations distributed over time it is possible that other events can emerge from the environment to interfere with them, or can emerge from within the person to disrupt them. Interruptions would be an example of the first, and emotions and biases would be examples of the second.

Fourth, *in the processes of critical thinking, not everything is in our control*. In particular, the reflective insight, like all insights, is not in our control. We cannot summon it at will, but must wait for its occurrence. In addition, reflective questions are only partially in our control. Sometimes we can pose them as part of a pre-set protocol; however, sometimes they come suddenly and unexpectedly. If these considerations are correct then a strong form of constructivism is false.

Fifth, *it is possible to confuse the different types of critical thinking*. Because the three types of critical thinking have a similar structure and because we often do not pay much attention to the question at hand (as a question), it is possible to confuse the various types of critical thinking. Yet each type of critical thinking has a distinct goal, as anticipated by its guiding question. Without distinguishing these goals one may retreat to a less specific definition of critical thinking as "thinking carefully." However, to do that removes important distinctions that are involved in the projects of factual, value-oriented, and deliberative critical thinking.

Finally, *critical thinking can be voluntarily suspended* at any time, for any amount of time. Here I assume that we have some control over our actions and our thinking. If that is the case, then not only can critical thinking be disturbed, but we can suspend it at any time and for any length of time we choose. Experience will provide the data on the extent to which we, in

fact, do this. Perservering with critical thinking will increase the probability of growth-oriented effects associated with it. Failing to continue with it precludes those effects. To these effects we now turn.

If the account of critical thinking that has been presented here is accurate, then, for any who choose to engage in it, a number of effects can be predicted based on the reported experiences of others and on relevant psychological research. For convenience, we may regard such effects as *immediate*, *medium-term*, and *long-term effects*. Such effects constitute largely the establishment of new habits and follow the general path for the installation of new habits as identified by James Prochaska and his associates.<sup>19</sup> Short-term effects can be regarded as those events that take place within the thinker during the first two weeks of attempts to think critically in a given area. They correspond to the "preparation" and "action" phases of Prochaska's habit development model. Medium-term effects correspond to an increasing efficiency in practice, interspersed with regular relapses to former ways of thinking. They correspond to Prochaska's "action" and "maintenance" phases. Long-term effects constitute a settling into a new habit of critical thinking (the "termination" phase), or a re-affirmation of old habits of non-critical thinking. None of these effects is mechanistically determined, and their emergence will be in accord with schedules of probability relevant to the individual.

Within a few days or weeks, *immediate effects* of thinking critically in a given area will likely emerge. These will include: (1) experiences of success and failure, (2) an increased ability to learn from success and failure, (3) the ability to track performance, (4) a clarification of what is and is not in our power, (5) the emergence of doubt about the entire effort.

There will be both successes and failures. Success will follow on the pursuit of our natural desire to know. The desire to know, as it appears in critical thinking, is a desire to "get things right" according to some criterion. In the case of factual critical thinking, the criterion may be one of truth or probability. In the case of value-oriented critical thinking, the criterion may be one of "the good" or of "worth." In the case of deliberative critical thinking, the criterion may be one of effectiveness, or usefulness, or viability. This desire to get things right is, in principle, opposed to errors of various sorts, including all varieties of deception and self-deception. To the extent

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<sup>19</sup>James Prochaska, John Norcross, and Carlo DiClemente, *Changing for Good* (New York: Avon Books, 1994).



that successes do occur, there will likely be a re-commitment to the critical thinking associated with them.

Regarding failures, it can be predicted that misunderstandings and mistakes of various sorts will likely be made. This can lead to two quite different outcomes. There is the growth-oriented possibility of learning from the mistakes of self and others, and the no-growth route of ignoring mistakes or being overwhelmed by them.

We will also be in a position to learn from our successes and failures and from the successes and failures of others. That type of learning will assist in replicating critical success in the future. "Nothing succeeds like success." It will also allow a useful respect for mistakes and for the learning power of making mistakes. However, it is not guaranteed that we will grow from our successes and failures in learning; we may instead choose simply not to study them.

The possibility of tracking our performance also emerges early on. As we continue to work with questions and insights, judgments and decisions, criteria and reasons or evidence, it will become clear that it is possible to track such events by means of logs, notes, or journals of various kinds. Such records would track the growth of our understanding, knowledge, and practice.<sup>20</sup> Or, in contrast, no record may be kept, thus losing valuable information on how we grew.

There will be greater clarity regarding the different aspects of critical thinking. As our experience with the elements of critical thinking increases, it will become clear that all of its acts, operations, and events are not in our power. In particular, insights of any sort are not in our power, and while we may pursue and cultivate them, we must wait for their occurrence. In addition, some questions (both formulated and unformulated) are also not in our power to conjure up at will, but may occur to us quite suddenly and unexpectedly. An example of someone being prepared for unexpected questions and insights is the story told of Einstein while he was living at Princeton. He arranged to have notebooks in every room of his house in case an insight or question occurred to him. At the end of each month he would collect and review these to determine if they were worth pursuing.

Finally, doubts about one's efficacy and about the worth of the enterprise will begin to appear. As we continue to grapple with facts of consciousness

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<sup>20</sup>William Mathews, "Meaning: Dimensions, Dialectics and Ontologies," paper presented at the 40th Annual Lonergan Workshop, Boston College (2013).



such as questions and insights, judgments and decisions, criteria and reasons or evidence, the question of whether or not the effort to think critically is worth it will arise. The mutually exclusive possibilities of recommitment or abandonment arise here as well.<sup>21</sup>

Within a year, after the initial rush of immediate effects, *mid-term effects* of thinking critically in a given area will likely emerge. These represent a more concerted effort to establish the habits of critical thinking, and they can be described especially well by Prochaska's "action" and "maintenance" stages of habit change. These will include: (1) a more accurate gauging of the effort required to think critically, (2) consideration of conflicting viewpoints along with an accompanying anxiety, (3) the emergence of partial role models, (4) a deepening clarification of the facts of consciousness, (5) a further clarification of one's optimal work style, and (6) emergence of doubt about the entire effort.

There will be a more accurate gauging of just how much effort is required to think critically and to do this well. Taking critical thinking seriously requires an expenditure of effort. Daniel Kahneman would regard critical thinking as a slower form of thinking that requires expenditures of energy.<sup>22</sup> Edwin Locke and Gary Latham, in their description of high performance (in any area), give a prominent place to perseverance.<sup>23</sup> Such expenditures of energy in critical thinking may be associated with a loss of energy elsewhere, and it raises the challenge of continued perseverance.

Sustained critical thinking requires consideration of conflicting viewpoints, some with no clear resolution. These habits may very well take us to unexpected and not-previously desired positions. This heightened state of cognitive dissonance<sup>24</sup> and uncertainty may give way to an increase in anxiety. This changed emotional state need not be debilitating and may be used as merely a heightened state of attentiveness and concern. Those who insist on states of comfort and certainty will not be found on this path. However, along the way, partial role models are likely to appear.

Continued experience with the facts of consciousness will clarify

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<sup>21</sup>Edwin Locke and Gary Latham, "Work Motivation and Satisfaction: Light at the End of the Tunnel," *Psychological Science* 1, no. 4 (1990) 240-46.

<sup>22</sup>Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (New York: Geroux, 2012).

<sup>23</sup>Locke and Latham, "Work Motivation and Satisfaction"; Edwin Locke, *New Developments in Goal Setting and Task Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>24</sup>Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957).

even further the functional differences between factual critical thinking, value-oriented critical thinking and deliberative critical thinking. Each of these is associated with a different area of consciousness, guided by distinct questions. It should also clarify what confusion results when these differences are not recognized and are confused with one another.

There will emerge further clarification of one's optimal work style. One's developing familiarity with critical thinking will also likely clarify whether one works best alone or in problem-solving groups. In addition, if one works well in groups, there should be increasing understanding of what those groups are.

There will also be a re-emergence of doubt about the entire effort. Given all of these predicted mid-term effects, the "Is it worth it?" question is likely to arise yet again. It is what might be referred to as "formative satisfaction." This is reminiscent of former New York City mayor Ed Koch's question "How am I doing?"<sup>25</sup>

Over the course of time, after the initial rush of immediate effects and the extended dealing with mid-term effects, critical thinking is likely to move forward as a settled habit – easier to do than not. At this point, the *long-term effects* of critical thinking can be expected. These represent a consolidation of all previous success to establish the habits of critical thinking, and they are described by Prochaska's *stage of maintenance*. These will include: (1) an accumulated learning and expertise accompanied by changes in perception, (2) both self-transcendence and a growing self-knowledge and self-appropriation, (3) changed relationships, (4) a settled synergy. and (5) a transformation of the value-added question.

There will be an accumulated learning and expertise accompanied by changes in perception. These changes constitute the fact of repeated cognitive self-transcendence, whereby one's previous understanding and knowledge has become greatly expanded. In addition, previous gains, the results of a discursive process and slow thinking, become increasingly a matter of recognition and fast thinking. Yet this form of fast thinking incorporates all the prior work and experience of the more cautious critical thinking.<sup>26</sup>

These changes represent a degree of self-transcendence. They also allow for a growing self-knowledge and self-appropriation. The changes

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<sup>25</sup>Edward I. Koch, *Mayor: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

<sup>26</sup>Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*; Gerald Nosich, *Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking across the Curriculum*, 4th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2012), 28-29.



themselves provide data of consciousness whereby one is in a position to recognize oneself as an experiencer, an agent of understanding, a judge and a decider. In addition, should a person acquire that self-knowledge, they are positioned to recognize, affirm, and manage themselves as learners. Such achievements as self-knowledge and self-management are relatively rare. In these cases, such habits take us beyond our previously constituted "self" to a more competent and integrated self.

Because there are changes in the previously constituted "self," that self is transcended by a more comprehensive, competent and integrated self. One can expect changes in relationships with others, particularly if the others in these relationships are not growing. There will also be a set of changes in our perceived relations with the world, as previous experiences and facts are likely to be reinterpreted.

There will be a synergistic dance between questions and insights and the other facts of consciousness associated with them, such as formulating ideas, collecting and weighing evidence, making judgments and decisions and choosing to act on considered decisions.

The "Is it worth it?" question will arise in a new form: "Was it worth it?" Instead of an ongoing formative assessment of how we are doing, there will be more of a transition to a summative assessment of how we have done.

#### 4. WHAT CONCRETE STEPS CAN BE TAKEN TO DEVELOP A HABIT OF THINKING CRITICALLY?

Usually when we hear or read something new, we just compare it to our own ideas. If it is the same, we accept it and say that it is correct. If it is not, we say it is incorrect. In either case, we learn nothing.<sup>27</sup>

If one chooses to take critical thinking seriously, then one will be faced with the task of making room in one's life for the acts, operations, and events that make up critical thinking [e.g., collecting reasons and evidence, recording, mulling things over, selecting criteria, applying criteria, awaiting reflective insights, formulating results in an appropriate language, etc.]. If one chooses to take critical thinking seriously then one chooses to make room for growth through learning – the very opposite of "learning nothing."

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<sup>27</sup>Thich Nhat Hahn, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* (New York: Parallax Press, 1998), 12.



To get more specific, I recommend that these five questions should be addressed: (1) How might any of the types of critical thinking (factual, value-oriented, deliberative) be used in my work? (2) How might they be used in other areas of everyday life? (3) What can I do now to foster the specific acts, operations, and events of critical thinking? (4) What do I find that *interferes* with critical thinking in any of these areas? (5) How can I begin to address such interferences?

To address questions (1) and (2), the reader is invited to inventory what they do at work and elsewhere and to identify how things might be improved by taking the time to "get things right" in any of the three senses of critical thinking.

Regarding question (3), one might consider how to make room in one's life for the emergence, preservation, and use of questions and insights, much as Einstein made room for collecting questions and insights that occurred to him while working on some physics problem. Such a "making room for questions and insights" may become a discipline and may require such activities as *meditation* (for calming down and for exclusion of extraneous emotional influence) and *contemplation* (for playful focus or single-mindedness, which may be done through the activities of questioning themselves). If a person were to undertake a disciplined use of critical thinking, one could begin this practice with non-controversial topics. It could then be extended to non-controversial but useful topics, then to topics controversial and useful to others, then to topics controversial and useful to self. In each expansion, one develops a greater capacity for being motivated by reasons and evidence and not by prejudice and passion.

Relevant to (4), an intellectual journal might prove helpful in recording the data of consciousness and in tracking the microevents of learning. In such a journal, one is likely to discover a progressive alternation between *questions* and *insights*, *images* and *evidence*, *judgments* and *decisions*. In addition, what is also likely to become clear is the alternation between those events that are *within our power* (e.g., attending, seeking, formulating, judging, deciding, expressing) and those that are *not in our power* (unformulated questions, insights, past expressions, initial desire to know). These kinds of records will provide a map of both our ignorance and emerging knowledge. Such records will also highlight the role of questions and insights in our progress (or lack thereof).

In addition, by comparing our own journal entries with other autobiographical accounts of discovery and invention, it will become clear that we are part of a community of learners that has existed here and there throughout human history.<sup>28</sup> In addition, these records will also help us to identify specific errors in our thinking through a critique of mistaken beliefs.<sup>29</sup>

Finally to deal with question (5), once specific interferences have been identified, concrete steps can be discovered or invented to jumpstart learning and to move in another direction.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this paper an attempt was made to address four questions about critical thinking: what is so useful about critical thinking, what is it?, what are some consequences of taking critical thinking seriously? And what concrete steps can be taken to foster a habit of critical thinking? Three of these questions primarily concern the value of critical thinking in contemporary situations, and they invite personal reflection and deliberation on the part of the reader. In a prior article, I attempted to deal more specifically with what critical thinking is in some detail, and then to delineate some of the contexts in which it may occur.<sup>30</sup> The current article may be regarded as an introduction to that work.

Should the reader conclude, based on these remarks and on their own personal experience, that there is not much to be gained by the three varieties of critical thinking identified here, then no more needs to be said. For them, on balance, it just is not worth it. In their attempts to "get things right," they will rely on their peer groups or their favorite media outlet. They may well be following transient fads; they "will get along by going along." Affirming a point of view one day, and its opposite the next, they will be a reliable guide to none.

However, if the reader concludes that factual, valued-oriented, and deliberative critical thinking are essential to a well-lived life, then they are invited to develop a deeper experience-based knowledge as recommended by many authors.<sup>31</sup> They are invited to experience for themselves what the

<sup>28</sup>Mathews, "Meaning: Dimensions."

<sup>29</sup>*Insight*.

<sup>30</sup>Gallo, "Thinking Carefully about Critical Thinking."

<sup>31</sup>Robert Ennis, *Critical Thinking* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996); David Levy, *Tools of Critical Thinking: Metathoughts for Psychology* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1997); Jennifer Moon, *Critical Thinking: An Exploration of Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge,



attempt "to get things right" is all about. More specifically, if this discussion of areas of consciousness assists readers to clearly distinguish the various cognitive functions found in their own thinking, then a greater self-knowledge and self-direction are the likely results.

Choosing in favor of critical thinking (in all three senses) is to find in favor of a lifelong dance between questions and insights, images and evidence, judgments and decisions. It is a kind of cosmic game of baseball requiring that we "stretch, catch, hold, and release."

Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein viewed learning as primarily a *language game*, embedded in social contexts and governed by public rules.<sup>32</sup> In his view, language (as broadly described) is invoked as an arbiter for any verbalized dispute. What is public and social in the game receives primary focus. What is private and individual is devalued and ignored.

However, complex human learning is wider than this view and will not long be confined in that way. In contrast, the view presented here is that complex human learning is a far more comprehensive game that includes public and private events, individuals in interaction with their environments, verbal and pre-verbal elements, all with habitual and conscious aspects.<sup>33</sup>

As an analogy, consider the game of baseball. To be more specific, consider the position of an outfielder. A great deal of preparation and habit acquisition goes into the making of a good outfielder. Very few in life will ever play that position for Major League Baseball. What do outfielders do in the field? In crucial moments, they must *stretch* to reach a ball in flight. Sometimes, they do not get there in time. They must *catch* the ball. Sometimes, they do not. They must *hold* the ball, gaining some control over it. Sometimes, they drop it. Finally, they must *release* the ball in a targeted way to advance the game in their team's favor. Sometimes, they do not.

Critical thinking is a human learning game wherein the learner is an outfielder. It requires some preparation merely to enter any field of human learning. Then it will require stretching (questioning – a private or public event) to get the point. It requires catching or grasping the point (insight – a private event). It requires holding on to the point (formulating – a private

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2007); Nosich, *Learning to Think Things Through*.

<sup>32</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.)

<sup>33</sup>Joseph Fitzpatrick, *Philosophical Encounters: Lonergan and the Analytical Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Hugo Meynell, *Redirecting Philosophy: Reflections on the Nature of Knowledge from Plato to Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).



or public event). Finally, it requires a targeted release, wherein the formulated insight is not seen as an end in itself, but as part of a larger "game" of understanding (a private or public event) and then "passes into the habitual structure of the mind" (a private event).<sup>34</sup>

For those who choose to enter any field of human learning, critical thinking will be among their tools – requiring them to cognitively stretch, catch, hold, and release.

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<sup>34</sup>*Insight*, chap.1.

## CURIOSITY, WONDER, AND OUR NEED TO KNOW: THE DYNAMICS OF COGNITIVE DESIRE IN LONERGAN'S GENERALIZED EMPIRICAL METHOD

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"THE ONLY TRUE VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY," wrote Proust, "would be . . . to possess other eyes."<sup>1</sup> What separates those who accept the version of reality they take for granted from those who "see" things differently than the vast majority of people? Is such "vision" the product of a probing curiosity, a penetrating wonder, or some inexplicable combination of both mind-sets? However we attempt to explain it, our need to know is a stimulus to scientific discoveries (especially, those that seem to emerge with an instantaneous "flash" of insight). This inquiring disposition, it appears, is really preliminary to that creative imagination which enables us to entertain the possibility of alternate worldviews. Richard Feynman captures the subtle relationship between cognitive desire and the open-endedness of intellectual pursuits: ". . . with more knowledge comes more mystery, luring one to penetrate deeper still . . . to find unimagined strangeness leading to more wonderful questions and mysteries?"<sup>2</sup> In a very real sense, those responsible for scientific discoveries seem to be gifted with a special "vision" that allows them to "see" beyond the appearances of things and to entertain bold new theoretical models.

But what is the epistemological status of a given "moment" of discovery? How does cognitive desire enter into the knowing process? Are scientific advances the result of a careful adherence to established methods, or do they

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<sup>1</sup>Marcel Proust, *La Prisonniere*, vol. 5 of *A la recherche du temps perdu*: "Le seul veritable voyage . . . d'avoir d'autres yeux . . ."

<sup>2</sup>Richard Feynman, "The Value of Science," in *The Pleasure of Finding Things Out* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1999), 144.

also involve certain non-rational factors (for example, personality, intuition, imagination)? Should scientists' desire to know define the scope of their investigation, or should it conform to recognized canons of research? These kinds of questions clearly assume an interdisciplinary relevance, touching upon the diverse manifestations of cognitive desire in the intellectual enterprise as a whole.

### 1. FOCUS, METHODOLOGY, KEY THEMES

For purposes of this paper, my major focus lies in tracing the dynamics of cognitive desire in promoting human inquiry. My treatment of this issue finds an ideal touchstone in the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan, S.J. (1904-84). Lonergan embarks upon an ambitious and wide-ranging investigation of the complex processes involved in knowing. This investigation, however, rests upon an incisive exploration of the various stages of the scientific method. According to Lonergan, the very raising of questions lies at the heart of that method. Questioning opens the way to the manifold activities in which scientists engage, namely, the formulation of hypotheses, the analysis of accumulated data, and the drawing of conclusions.

But while questioning provides the foundation for the scientific method, inquiry itself must proceed from something fundamental to us as human beings, that is, "a pure, detached, disinterested desire to know," simply for the sake of knowing. In this paper, I delineate Lonergan's treatment of this brand of desire in connection with the "generalized scientific method" that he develops in his major work *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding* (first published in 1957). My critical assessment of Lonergan's intellectual project further draws upon his own commentary on *Insight*, as developed in his *Halifax Lectures*. As a point of departure, then, let us consider the mainlines of Lonergan's "generalized empirical method" and its significance for his overall cognitional theory.

For Lonergan, knowledge rests upon insights into the raw data of cognitional activities and the verification of those insights on a personal basis.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, our acquisition of knowledge presupposes a transcendence of sensory input, and a subjection of empirical data to the critical scrutiny of the intellect. From Lonergan's standpoint, the "picturing"

<sup>3</sup>Ted Dunne, "Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984)," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* ([www.iep.utm.edu/lonergan/](http://www.iep.utm.edu/lonergan/)), 2.



model of knowing generates a false dichotomy between the inner world of the knower and the external realm of what is known. Cognition, he assumes, aims at building a set of insights, not merely a set of pictures.<sup>4</sup> Knowledge is not simply a matter of the mind's conformity with what lies "outside" it. Rather, knowledge presupposes understanding. Cognitional activities such as questioning, insight, and judgment serve as the means of discerning the truth value of sense data. But this can only be accomplished by a critical investigation of the way in which we know. In this respect, Lonergan challenges us to engage in a personal appropriation of the dynamic structure inherent in our own cognitional processes.

Thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also . . . possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further development of understanding.<sup>5</sup>

Because the knowing process opens us to what is really real, Lonergan's epistemology is closely aligned with his metaphysics. If his epistemology focuses upon the inner workings of cognition, his metaphysics addresses the things to which mind directs its questioning. This is consistent with his critical realism: on the one hand, Lonergan addresses the subjective conditions which make knowledge possible; on the other hand, he affirms the mind's ability to make true judgments concerning objective reality. The crucial link between the contribution of the knowing subject and a grounding in the really real is provided by the sheer desire to know, the incentive to learning which opens us to an infinite horizon of being and the whole spectrum of intelligible inquiry (from the natural sciences to the humanities to every other area of human investigation).

## 2. INSIGHT INTO *INSIGHT*

The acquisition of insight assumes a pivotal role in Lonergan's generalized empirical method. The notion of "insight," however, is a complex one, connoting both a mental activity (that is, something we think about) and a

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<sup>4</sup>Ted Dunne, "Bernard Lonergan," 2.

<sup>5</sup>Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., introduction to *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), xxviii.

fundamental constituent of knowledge in its own right.<sup>6</sup> In keeping with his emphasis upon the personal appropriation of cognitional process, Lonergan seeks an "insight into insight" (that is, an insight into the meaning and operation of insight in cognition). By appropriating insight itself, we make it our own.

Indeed, it is a knowledge of knowledge that seems extremely relevant to a whole series of basic problems in philosophy. Insight, then, includes the apprehension of meaning, and insight into insight includes the apprehension of the meaning of meaning.<sup>7</sup>

But since "insight into insight" runs the gamut of what we know (from theoretical concerns to the most practical endeavors), it also assumes a significant regulatory role, as a means of discerning the quality of cognitive activity. From this standpoint, some cognitive activity yields more rational accounts of truth than others.

Insight into insight . . . will reveal what activity is intelligent, and insight into oversights will reveal what activity is unintelligent.<sup>8</sup>

At the outset of his deliberations on the scientific method, Lonergan finds a paradigmatic illustration of the operation of insight in that most seminal of "eureka moments," Archimedes's grasp of the principles of displacement theory. By appropriating the processes underlying Archimedes's insight into the implications of a concrete situation (whereby the volume of water displaced is equal to the volume of what is immersed in it), we attain an insight of our own. In so doing, we isolate the salient features of the emergence of any insight whatsoever: a release of the "tension of inquiry"; a sudden and unexpected manifestation; an outgrowth of "inner conditions" rather than external circumstances; an oscillation between the concrete and the abstract; and finally, a passage of the insight into the "habitual texture of one's mind."<sup>9</sup>

For Lonergan, however, insight is not so spontaneous that it literally

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<sup>6</sup>*Insight*, preface, xi.

<sup>7</sup>*Insight*, preface, xi.

<sup>8</sup>*Insight*, preface, xiv.

<sup>9</sup>*Insight*, 4.

comes "out of nowhere" at all. It only emerges as the result of an antecedent desire that is fundamental to discovery and every form of knowing.

Deep within us all, emergent when the noise of other appetites is stilled, there is a drive to know, to understand, to see why, to discover the reason, to find the cause, to explain.<sup>10</sup>

Herein lies the difference between the exaltation inherent in fresh discovery and the more reserved disposition of the practitioner of what Thomas Kuhn designates as "normal science," that peaceful interlude of "business as usual" between radical scientific revolutions.<sup>11</sup> Because such discovery is new and revolutionary (at least in relation to what is normally anticipated), it does not emerge as the end product of any conscious decision or effort.

The wholly unanticipated character of insight accounts for the exhilaration of the one experiencing it. While insight proceeds from experience (e.g., Archimedes's experience of the action of water), it must go beyond mere sensory input. Insight requires the kind of intelligent response reflected in the ability to ask "Why?" regarding the same phenomena that less inquiring minds tend to ignore. In this respect, insight opens the way to a transition from complete anomaly to something commonplace, ingrained in one's expectations about nature.

However laborious the first occurrence of an insight may be, subsequent repetitions occur almost at will. For we can learn inasmuch as we can add insights to insight, as the new does not extrude the old but complements and combines with it . . . and as one begins to catch on . . . does the initial darkness yield to a subsequent period of increasing light.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>*Insight*, 4.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas S. Kuhn (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970], 24) describes "normal science" in these terms: "Few people who are not actually practitioners of a mature science realize how much mop-up work of this sort a paradigm leaves to be done or quite how fascinating such work can prove in the execution. Mopping-up operations are what engage most scientists throughout their careers. They constitute what I am here calling normal science . . . an attempt to force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies. No part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena; indeed those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all."

<sup>12</sup>*Insight*, 6.



The very posing of the "Why?" question underscores what Lonergan designates as "the primordial drive" that finds expression in the "pure question" antecedent to insight. The raising of the question is the mark of intellectual curiosity. Lonergan links this drive toward inquiry with the wonder that Aristotle specified as the beginning of science and philosophy.<sup>13</sup> For Lonergan, as for Aristotle, this dynamic intellectual orientation is part and parcel of being human.

When an animal has nothing to do, it goes to sleep. When a man has nothing to do, he may ask questions. The first moment is an awakening to one's intelligence. It is release from the dominance of biological drive and from the routines of everyday living. It is the effective emergence of wonder, of the desire to understand.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. AN INTELLIGIBLE INQUIRY

Cognitive desire is the motive in every area of human inquiry. A major concern of *Insight*, however, is the role of cognitive desire in scientific pursuits. Since such endeavors have an empirical grounding, they draw upon the data of sense experience. Lonergan stresses that the content of sensation does not arise in some "cognitional vacuum," but requires a context shaped by the interests of the inquirer.<sup>15</sup> If this were not the case, then scientific investigation would amount to no more than a passive response to sensory data. There is a significant difference between scientific observation and mere perception. Scientists do not dispense with the input of the senses, but place it in a new cognitive framework.

Just as the woodsman, craftsman, artist, the expert in any field acquires a spontaneous perceptiveness lacking in other men, so too does the scientific observer.<sup>16</sup>

In this new context, the natural attitude toward certain familiar phenomena is replaced by the disinterested scrutiny of the inquiring

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<sup>13</sup>*Insight*, 9.

<sup>14</sup>*Insight*, 10.

<sup>15</sup>*Insight*, 73.

<sup>16</sup>*Insight*, 74.

intelligence. From the standpoint of the ordinary perceiver, the critical stance of the scientist may seem strange or even absurd. Such was the experience of the pre-Socratic natural philosopher Thales of Miletus (called by some the "founder" of the Western philosophical and scientific traditions), who became an object of ridicule after his seemingly absent-minded star-gazing caused him to fall down a well.<sup>17</sup> If the capacity to raise questions is a salient feature of rational minds, this trait appears to be more pronounced in the inquiring intelligence of the scientist. Lonergan, in fact, describes this trait as "the guiding orientation of the scientist."<sup>18</sup>

As already observed, Lonergan views the inquiring intelligence as the outgrowth of something more fundamental, namely, the "pure, detached, disinterested desire" simply to know.<sup>19</sup> In Lonergan's estimation, cognitive appetite is the *sine qua non* of all questioning.<sup>20</sup> Before any insight or understanding enters consciousness, the inquiry that initiates it is sustained by our sheer attraction to the prospect of knowing. In the face of the vast multiplicity of ways in which scientific investigation unfolds, Lonergan discerns an enduring constant in "the dynamic structure of inquiring intelligence."<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. A MATTER OF COMMON SENSE

It would be erroneous to assume that the inquiring intelligence is limited to people of a scientific bent alone. While this faculty acquires a methodological dimension in the activities of the scientist, it is readily evident in the lives of the proverbial man or woman "in the street," in the most mundane situations in which they find themselves. One meets intelligence in every walk of life.

In every instance, the man or woman of intelligence is marked by a greater readiness in catching on, in getting the point, in seeing the issue, in grasping implications in acquiring know-how.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>*Insight*, 73.

<sup>18</sup>*Insight*, 74.

<sup>19</sup>*Insight*, 74.

<sup>20</sup>*Insight*, 74.

<sup>21</sup>*Insight*, 116.

<sup>22</sup>*Insight*, 172.

Such down to earth, everyday intelligence is guided by nothing more than the dictates of common sense. Herein lies the difference between common sense and the sciences.

Common sense...never aspires to universally valid knowledge and it never attempts exhaustive communication. Its concern is the concrete and particular. Its function is to master each situation as it arises.<sup>23</sup>

In this respect, Lonergan stresses the groundedness of common sense in the everyday world of practical experience.

Common sense...has no theoretical inclinations. It remains completely in the familiar world of things for us. The further questions, by which it accumulates insights, are bounded by the interests and concerns of human living, by the successful performance of daily tasks, by the discovery of immediate solutions that will work.<sup>24</sup>

From this standpoint, the spirit of inquiry that emerges in our own early questioning (e.g., "Why is the sky blue?" or "Why does it rain?") anticipates the more sophisticated inquiries of mathematics and the empirical sciences. Lonergan explores the inquiring disposition which all people share against the background of human development, from childhood onward.

There is . . . common to all men, the very spirit of inquiry that constitutes the scientific attitude. But in its native state it is untutored. Our intellectual careers begin to bud in the incessant "What?" and "Why?" of childhood. They flower only if we are willing, or constrained, to learn how to learn.<sup>25</sup>

The transition to an ability to "learn how to learn" requires the willingness to subject one's questioning to a methodological structure. In order for questioning to be efficacious (at least in scientific terms), it must be both goal oriented and restrained. Indeed, *questioning everything* (in the manner of the inquisitive child) would amount to so much cognitive

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<sup>23</sup>*Insight*, 176-77.

<sup>24</sup>*Insight*, 178.

<sup>25</sup>*Insight*, 174.



"wheel-spinning" for scientists. Accordingly, what manifests itself as a "secret wonder" that "rushes forth in a cascade of questions" must acquire a strategy in the gathering of insights.<sup>26</sup> Wonder provides the "raw matter" of inquiry requiring the "form" of schemes and systems. In this connection, Lonergan draws a parallel between the scientific and the artistic quests for form.

Just as the scientist seeks intelligible systems that cover the data of his field . . . the artist exercises his intelligence in discovering ever novel forms that unify and relate the contents and acts of aesthetic experience.<sup>27</sup>

In their own distinctive ways, scientists and artists find mutual joy in an intellectual creativity that frees them from the biological limitations of our humanness.<sup>28</sup> Scientists and artists alike use their minds not just for the sheer enjoyment of intellectual activity, but in order to produce something tangible. Inevitably, such productivity has a social impact. For Lonergan, this communitarian spirit fosters the give-and-take attitude that is conducive to scientific growth and development. Egoism, on the other hand, rejects the "self-abnegation" that renders intelligible inquiry possible through the free exchange of ideas and conflicting viewpoints.<sup>29</sup>

In the final analysis, the scientist has a greater stake in incessant questioning than the proverbial "man in the street." This is not to say, of course, that non-scientists are unconcerned with establishing the truth of things. But it does affirm that scientists (especially those of a theoretical bent) are preoccupied (or should be) with *ultimate explanations* that necessitate an extension of inquiry above and beyond normal, everyday requirements.<sup>30</sup>

While the child's incessant questioning about seemingly trivial matters can become bothersome to adults, the scientist's demand for exactitude can be viewed as excessively pedantic in routine situations. In both instances,

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<sup>26</sup>*Insight*, 173.

<sup>27</sup>*Insight*, 184.

<sup>28</sup>*Insight*, 185. By the same token, Lonergan (185) recognizes the differences between the scientific method and artistic activity. If wonder liberates us from a biological determinism, then art frees intelligence "from the wearying constraints of mathematical proofs, scientific verifications, and common sense factualness."

<sup>29</sup>*Insight*, 220.

<sup>30</sup>*Insight*, 295.

the repeated raising of the "Why?" question may not find a receptive audience among those absorbed in what they consider the more urgent "real life" concerns of day-to-day existence. For them, the child's questions sound naïve, while those of the scientist amount to superfluous hairsplitting. After all, how relevant is quantum physics or string theory in the face of pressing socio-economic issues like widespread unemployment, rising tuition costs, and soaring medical expenses?

For his part, however, Lonergan depicts the scientist as someone almost compelled to engage in probing intellectual inquiry. We find a parallel here between the imposition of questioning upon the scientist and our subjection to the onrush of sensation (whether or not we wish to receive this sensory input). Ordinarily, sensation is not a matter of choice. Since perception is inextricably bound up with conscious experience, we cannot avoid our encounter with the external world. In this case, however, our sensory awareness also arouses the wonder which acts as the initial stimulus to inquiry. In a very real sense, our capacity for wonder works closely in conjunction with a mode of knowing grounded firmly in the empirical environment.

If I cannot escape presentations and representations, neither can I be content with them. Spontaneously I fall victim to the wonder that Aristotle named the beginning of all science and philosophy. I try to understand. I enter, without questioning, the dynamic state that is revealed in questions for intelligence.<sup>31</sup>

As Lonergan is quick to point out, inquiry and insights do not manifest themselves to the knower on some rarefied plane, completely detached from the materials at hand. Inquiry does not qualify as "pure wonder" (since we always wonder *about something*) and insight does not consist of a "pure understanding" (since we always have an understanding *of something*).<sup>32</sup> Likewise, we do not know (particularly in science) on a piecemeal basis. Accordingly, Lonergan is committed to a holistic grasp of things that ultimately rests upon a real world exhibiting its own intrinsic unity.

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<sup>31</sup>*Insight*, 330.

<sup>32</sup>*Insight*, 343.

If one supposes that the whole universe is a pattern of internal relations . . . it follows that no part and no aspect of the universe can be known in isolation from any other part or aspect; for every item is related internally to every other.<sup>33</sup>

### 5. THE CONDITIONS OF SOUND JUDGMENT

In strict epistemological terms, judgment represents the culmination of the various stages of knowing, extending from sensation to full understanding. Judgment finalizes cognitional process because it links conceptual awareness with what we believe to be the case in the real order of things. Only judgments can be said to be "true" or "false"; only judgments entail an accountability on the part of the knower. In Lonergan's analysis of cognitional process, the conditions of a given judgment come to fruition in the absence of the need for further questions.<sup>34</sup> But the lack of further questions may also proceed from a number of factors which undermine intellectual curiosity. In the midst of competing interests and simple indecisiveness, curiosity (along with the questions it prompts) must be allowed to "take root" in one's consciousness.

The need of intellectual curiosity has to grow into a rugged tree to hold its own against the desires and fears, conations and appetites, drives and interests, that inhabit the heart.<sup>35</sup>

The ability of intellectual curiosity to "hold its own" in the midst of competing subjective influences is crucial if knowledge is to have a claim to objectivity. For Lonergan, objectivity in its *principal sense* always involves judgment, since this notion is itself "contained in a patterned context of judgments."<sup>36</sup> Stated succinctly, there is no objectivity prior to judgment for Lonergan. In this respect, he affirms a correlation between the correctness of judgments and the correct assumption that there are objects and subjects in the way in which judgments define them.<sup>37</sup> This amounts to saying that objectivity presupposes a knowledge of being, arrived at through the

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<sup>33</sup>*Insight*, 343-44.

<sup>34</sup>*Insight*, 284.

<sup>35</sup>*Insight*, 285.

<sup>36</sup>*Insight*, 375.

<sup>37</sup>*Insight*, 376.



accumulation of accurate judgments.

But in addition to this principal notion, Lonergan specifies several partial aspects of objectivity manifest in cognitional process. Among these partial aspects, he includes a *normative objectivity* that is "contained in the contrast between the detached and unrestricted desire to know and...merely subjective desires and fears."<sup>38</sup> When Lonergan speaks of "subjectivity" in this context, he has in mind such factors as wishful thinking, rash or overly cautious judgments, or the allowing of certain emotions (joy, sadness, hope, fear, love, or detestation) to impede "the proper march of cognitional process."<sup>39</sup>

The tension between normative objectivity and subjectivity thus emerges in those tendencies which interfere with realizing the goal of cognition, that is, a grounding of one's judgments in the really and truly real. In this respect, normative objectivity is rooted in the unrestricted, detached, disinterested desire to know that undergirds cognitional process in general. "A dynamic orientation," Lonergan asserts, "defines its objective."<sup>40</sup> But by the same token, the pure desire to know also defines the manner by which we achieve that objective.

Lonergan stipulates what it means to be objective in the normative sense in terms of three levels of opposition arising from the unrestricted, detached, disinterested character of the pure desire to know: as *unrestricted*, it opposes the obscurantism that conceals the truth or impedes access to it; as *detached*, it opposes the kinds of emotional influences cited above; as *disinterested*, it stands opposed to the "reinforcement that other desires lend cognitional process" so as to confine its dynamism to "their limited range."<sup>41</sup> This final level of opposition is particularly relevant to normative objectivity, since such objectivity not only promotes free inquiry, but likewise requires some discrimination, whereby one distinguishes between questions that allow for solution and those that are presently unsolvable.

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<sup>38</sup>*Insight*, 375. In addition to this "normative aspect of objectivity," Lonergan includes (1) an *experiential* aspect, the "given as given...the field of materials about which one inquires" (*Insight*, 381) and (2) an *absolute* aspect, whose ground is "the virtually unconditioned...grasped by reflective understanding and posited in judgment" (*Insight*, 377).

<sup>39</sup>*Insight*, 380.

<sup>40</sup>*Insight*, 380.

<sup>41</sup>*Insight*, 380.

For the pure desire not only desires; it desires intelligently and reasonably; it desires to understand because it is intelligent and it desires to grasp the unconditioned because it desires to be reasonable.<sup>42</sup>

Everyday life, to be sure, does not require the same rigor that one expects in a scientific context. But by the same token, Lonergan maintains that the principles of scientific method can offer a useful guide (even in concrete circumstances) "by intellectual alertness, by taking one's time, by talking things over, by putting viewpoints to the test of action."<sup>43</sup> Science can also teach us that good judgment builds upon an accumulation of insights. But the insights cannot be haphazard or disconnected. In this vein, Lonergan stipulates that insights must be organized, complementary, and most importantly, correct.<sup>44</sup> Correct insights generate correct judgments.

If judgments are correct, however, their correctness is not based on the fact that I alone judge them to be so. Judgments must be tested by means of ongoing questioning.

Judgment on the correctness of insights supposes the prior acquisition of a large number of correct insights. But the prior insights are not correct because we judge them to be correct. They occur within a self-correcting process in which the shortcomings of each insight provoke further questions to yield complementary insights.<sup>45</sup>

This dialectical encounter is by no means open-ended in scope. It finds its limit in our ability to differentiate what is commonplace and expected from what is unexpected and genuinely novel.<sup>46</sup> While the former justifies a closure in questioning, the latter necessitates its continuance, and by implication, a resumption of the learning process.

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<sup>42</sup>*Insight*, 380.

<sup>43</sup>*Insight*, 285.

<sup>44</sup>*Insight*, 285-86.

<sup>45</sup>*Insight*, 286.

<sup>46</sup>*Insight*, 286.

## 6. THE TRUTH OF BEING

Lonergan's epistemology is correlative with a distinct metaphysical vision that upholds the objectivity of the really and truly real. As we have seen, the "pure desire to know" (which Lonergan alternately designates as "intellectual curiosity" or "wonder") initiates cognitional process. More precisely, he defines the "pure desire to know" as "the prior and enveloping drive that carries cognitional process from sense and imagination to understanding, from understanding to judgment, from judgment to the complete context of correct judgment that is named knowledge."<sup>47</sup> In this respect, Lonergan would deny that we wonder merely for the thrill of the experience. Wonder is goal-oriented; we always wonder about something.

Still, the "pure desire to know" assumes a distinctive character of its own as the veritable beginning of the knowing process. In keeping with its special cognitive status, Lonergan subjects this notion to a detailed analysis. He specifies four key roles of the "pure desire to know" in cognition:

*First, it moves us to seek understanding* (lifting us from contentment with mere consciousness);

*Secondly, it demands adequate understanding* (thereby opening us to the self-critical learning by which questioning proliferates and generates even more insights;

*Third, it motivates us to reflect* (and in so doing, to grant our assent only to *unconditioned* hypotheses and theories, in lieu of unverified ones);

*Fourth, it prompts us to raise further questions* (resisting any tendency toward complacency).<sup>48</sup>

Paradoxically, the "pure desire to know" (by virtue of its dynamism) is only discernible to the extent that it promotes intelligibility and rational awareness on our part. "As pure desire," Lonergan contends, "it is not for cognitional acts, and the satisfaction they give . . . but for cognitional contents, for what is to be known."<sup>49</sup>

Lonergan's critical realism assumes that any satisfaction we derive from knowing rests upon a *correct understanding*, rather than a satisfaction in one

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<sup>47</sup>*Insight*, 348.

<sup>48</sup>*Insight*, 348.

<sup>49</sup>*Insight*, 349.



that is false.<sup>50</sup> In his estimation, then, the "pure desire to know" exhibits a preference for truth.<sup>51</sup> But what constitutes "correct understanding" from the critical realist perspective? Clearly, it cannot be a matter of the "pure desire to know" alone, since mere affectivity does not qualify as knowledge. But the "pure desire to know" still provides the impetus to the relentless inquiry that is the very soul of knowing. Lonergan's realism defines the way in which he understands the objective of this desire, that is, as the desire to know being.<sup>52</sup> In this case, the "pure desire to know" seeks all that is knowable in the realm of being. If critical inquiry focuses upon being, however, it also provides the ultimate source of the right questions and the right answers to those questions.<sup>53</sup>

For all of its contribution to cognition, the "pure desire to know" presents something of a classificatory challenge. How, precisely, should we define it? Does it even qualify as something comprehensible? Lonergan frames the question in these terms: "How can an orientation or a desire be named a notion?"<sup>54</sup> His ensuing discussion turns upon the classic Aristotelian conception of potentiality, and the relation between what is in a potential state of being and what is fully actualized. In this context, we confront the problem of explaining how the pure potential for something can be objectively real at all.

In keeping with his reliance upon the potency/act distinction, Lonergan finds parallels between the "pure desire to know" and the act of knowing in the relations between

- (a) a foetal eye and the act of seeing;
- (b) hunger and the act of nourishment; and
- (c) purposive human action and its results.<sup>55</sup>

While a similarity is evident, there are significant differences as well. As Lonergan affirms, the "pure desire to know" is not unconscious (as in

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<sup>50</sup>This requires qualification. Lonergan does maintain that the *satisfaction* of erroneous understanding equals that of correct understanding. But this is only the case if one does not know that the understanding in question is *erroneous* (*Insight*, 349).

<sup>51</sup>*Insight*, 349.

<sup>52</sup>*Insight*, 354.

<sup>53</sup>*Insight*, 352.

<sup>54</sup>*Insight*, 354.

<sup>55</sup>*Insight*, 354.

the case of the foetal eye), nor is it empirically conscious (as in the case of hunger), nor is it the product of knowledge (in the way that choice is).<sup>56</sup>

Rather, the "pure desire to know" is already conscious in an intelligent and rational manner. When Lonergan designates it as both *intelligent and rational*, he stresses that it is not merely as an inclination toward being, but a notion of being in its own right.<sup>57</sup>

By virtue of the fact that the "pure desire to know" anticipates the intellectual grasp of being, it assumes a definite metaphysical standing in the real order of things. Stated in more explicit Thomistic terms, we discern a connaturality or fittingness between the "pure desire to know" and its objective. It is wholly reasonable that the unrestricted dynamism toward knowledge finds its appropriate end in the unrestricted nature of being itself. Since the totality of being encompasses the physical universe, this assumption says something vital about the scope of scientific investigation.<sup>58</sup> In this respect, the mind's dynamic orientation toward being is a desire to internalize its intelligibility. Lonergan discerns in this immanent drive a "spark of the divine" within human nature.<sup>59</sup>

It is significant that the unrestricted desire to know (which opens us to an infinite horizon of being) must also be detached and disinterested, commanding a single-minded focus that momentarily cancels all other concerns. These three features (i.e., detachment, disinterestedness, and non-restrictiveness) account for the uniqueness of the "pure desire to know" in our range of affectivities.

It is a desire to know and its immanent criterion is the attainment of an unconditioned that, by the fact that it is unconditioned, is independent of the individual's likes and dislikes, of his wishful and his anxious thinking.<sup>60</sup>

When Lonergan stipulates that the "pure desire to know" is guided by the goal of the "unconditioned," he only reaffirms that all intelligible inquiry is oriented toward being. From this standpoint, the "unconditioned"

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<sup>56</sup>*Insight*, 355.

<sup>57</sup>*Insight*, 355.

<sup>58</sup>*Insight*, 370.

<sup>59</sup>*Insight*, 370.

<sup>60</sup>*Insight*, 596.

can be construed as the cognitional "bottom line," so to speak, of human inquiry. All inquiry, regardless of its specific interests, is reducible to a quest for being. Implicit in this orientation is a faith that inquiry can be brought to closure in attaining truth, or in more concrete terms, the solution to a given problem. Still, the "pure, detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know" is not fixed upon the facts of being alone. It also encompasses what Lonergan calls the "practical possibilities" that offer the prospect of transforming the external world, along with our very mode of living.<sup>61</sup> It would be a mistake, then, to assume that "detached" and "disinterested" inquiry is a completely abstract endeavor, removed from the crucible of existential decision making. Since the way in which we know bears upon how we ought to live, the search for true being acquires considerable ethical import.

We have seen that Lonergan stresses the communitarian character of the scientific enterprise. Even the greatest scientists do not work in isolation from a community of practitioners and a larger human community. So too, inquiry cannot be divorced from real world concerns and the impact of intellectual pursuits on the choices that shape the quality of human existence. Both knowledge and action are guided by intelligent and rational consciousness.<sup>62</sup> But rational consciousness is correlative with moral consciousness, since the capacity to grasp truth is instrumental in our aptitude for right action.

## 7. THE TRANSCENDENT CHARACTER OF KNOWING

Lonergan roots cognition firmly in the concrete realm of sense experience. But the fact that knowledge is empirically grounded does not mean that it is exclusively of the empirical world. While Lonergan recognizes the mind's ability to grasp what is real, he challenges the assumption that knowing is no more than a matter of "taking a look at" something. If that were the case, then knowledge would amount to a passive reception of sense data. For Lonergan, knowledge must entail an act of transcendence, whereby we rise above sensory content in coming to understand what truly is.<sup>63</sup> Such transcendence is also evident in our ability to raise more and more questions about absolutely anything.

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<sup>61</sup>*Insight*, 598.

<sup>62</sup>*Insight*, 599.

<sup>63</sup>*Insight*, 634.



Because the "pure, detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know" is the source of questions, it also constitutes the immanent source of our transcendence.<sup>64</sup> As knowers, we are able to overcome the constraints of a single task or problem with a freedom to be all that we are as rational beings: an integration of mind and heart, reason and will. In this connection, the *unrestricted* character of cognitive desire is particularly significant. Since this desire emerges prior to actual understanding, it represents a potential state of not yet understanding.<sup>65</sup> It potentially opens us to the knowledge of all that is knowable. But the "pure desire to know" also requires a detachment and disinterestedness from anything that would divert the mind's focus from unimpeded inquiry. This demands a decisiveness that finds its guiding purpose in the mind's proper good.<sup>66</sup> Lonergan's assumption that the pursuit of knowledge is directed toward ends that we at least perceive to be good reveals his commitment to a eudaimonistic ideal that dominates Western thinking from Socrates onward. By and large, Lonergan's treatment of cognitional process is minimalistic in its references to a theistic perspective. In this particular instance, however, he explicitly identifies the mind's proper good with God, as the Ground of meaning and intelligibility. Only God can fulfill the conditions for attaining knowledge, since God is the ultimate Act of the being, truth, and goodness that we implicitly seek in every act of knowing. In this framework, Lonergan discerns a Divine wisdom operative in the universe and a Divine goodness that offers hope for the solution of the problem of evil.<sup>67</sup>

#### 8. IN SEARCH OF A DEEPER "VISION"

As our investigation of Lonergan has disclosed, the "pure desire to know" must be understood in terms of its relationship with cognitional process in its entirety. The purpose of this primordial desire is not a savoring of the experience itself or the enjoyment we derive from seeking knowledge. It lies in the grasp of truth. Contemporary Western culture, in contrast, tends to extol cognitive desire (i.e., curiosity) for its own sake, without serious consideration of its end. But to do so loosens curiosity from its ontological

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<sup>64</sup>*Insight*, 636.

<sup>65</sup>*Insight*, 637.

<sup>66</sup>*Insight*, 701.

<sup>67</sup>*Insight*, 701.

moorings as an inclination toward the really real. From Lonergan's perspective, we value cognitive desire because it leads us to a prolonged quest for true being. This is why he argues that critical reflection must tend toward the *unconditioned*. For only the unconditioned (that is, what frees us from the need for further questioning, at least in a given context) can satisfy our appetite for the intelligent finality that is the goal of rational inquiry.<sup>68</sup> In the final analysis, we do want answers to our questions (however provisional they may be), not just questions alone.

The desire to know is unlimited. This does not mean that there are no limits on what we actually know or hope to know. If cognitive desire is unlimited, it is because it stands in a potential state to everything that can be known. As Lonergan puts it, "the object is everything about everything."<sup>69</sup> In this respect, the scope of human inquiry is not confined to any single field or area of investigation. What we can know extends from the most concrete and practical topics to the most theoretical and speculative ones. Accordingly, the inquirer is confronted with a decisive option: either sustain the questioning or relinquish it in despair of ever finding any answers. The latter option stands opposed to the very character of our intellectual life. Lonergan cautions that forfeiting inquiry promotes an obscurantism that undermines the capacity for wonder which is so fundamentally human.<sup>70</sup>

In the *Halifax Lectures*, Lonergan posits wonder as a defining feature of our humanness without which we could not flourish as a species.

If a person naturally does not have the capacity to wonder, to be surprised by what he sees or hears or feels, to ask why, to ask what's happening, what's up, then there is no remedy; there is nothing one can do.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being: An Introduction and Companion to Insight*, The Halifax Lectures, ed. Elizabeth Morelli and Mark D. Morelli (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1980), 167; 185-86.

<sup>69</sup>Understanding and Being, 180-81.

<sup>70</sup>Understanding and Being, 181-82.

<sup>71</sup>Understanding and Being, 203. In point of fact, however, Lonergan does not make any explicit distinction between "wonder" and "curiosity". In *Insight*, he apparently subsumes both notions under the broad category of the "pure, detached, disinterested desire to know." The Lonergan of *Insight*, then, seems to use both terms to designate the cognitive desire which stimulates inquiry and gives rise to insights, the critical assessment of their veracity, the grasp of the unconditioned, and the judgment that something is the case. Still, we must ask if the meanings of "wonder" and "curiosity" are so easily conflated. In the *Halifax Lectures*, Lonergan focuses more exclusively on the role of "wonder" in cognitional process. Is this no more than



In concrete terms, the capacity to wonder cannot remain self-contained; it must find an outlet in unrestricted inquiry.

Because the range of this capacity for asking questions is unlimited, being is absolutely universal and absolutely concrete, the object towards which knowing moves.<sup>72</sup>

Wonder opens the way to even more profound expressions of inquiry, from the contemplation of the Divine nature to the metaphysical status of the mind and consciousness to the structure of matter on the most penetrating quantum levels. But wonder is never isolated from experience. Lonergan continually emphasizes its rootedness in sensation, perception, and images. As the raw material of subsequent investigation, wonder is always directed toward something.<sup>73</sup> Once again, the Aristotelian distinction between potency and act is applicable. In this regard, the object of wonder provides the occasion for bridging the gap between our capacity for wonder and the actual raising of questions.<sup>74</sup>

As the expression of the "pure desire to know," wonder has the potential to arouse our interest in absolutely everything. For this reason, it must be directed toward specific problems or issues if our inquiry is to yield knowledge. But wonder is not confined to empirical matters alone. It also manifests itself in the context of metaphysical inquiry, the most fundamental form of questioning. In this connection, Lonergan views wonder as instrumental in raising what he designates as the "total question" underlying every area of investigation.<sup>75</sup> The "total question" encompasses the totality of things, in a manner consistent with the subject matter of metaphysics, that is, being *qua* being (and not merely the being of things). Since all inquiry is directed toward some aspect of being, and metaphysics is directed toward being in its most universal sense, then metaphysics serves

a semantical variation on his part? Or, does it point to his recognition of the special role of "wonder" in our cognitive life, as something distinct from "curiosity"? If such a distinction in a valid one, how might that difference be defined? Like wonder, curiosity prompts questioning. But it does not necessarily sustain that questioning or motivate the inquirer toward reflection on the deeper truths of our existence. If curiosity moves us to look at our world more intently, wonder inspires us to behold it with an attitude bordering on the reverential.

<sup>72</sup>*Understanding and Being*, 203.

<sup>73</sup>*Understanding and Being*, 203.

<sup>74</sup>*Understanding and Being*, 233.

<sup>75</sup>*Understanding and Being*, 233.



as a "principle of unification" for all fields of intellectual endeavor.<sup>76</sup>

In confronting the very real possibility that some of our questions simply cannot be answered, we can only stare in awe at the profundity of the universe. Wonder is not preoccupied with the novel or unusual alone, but with what must always elude our complete understanding: the grasp of the mystery of being itself. We tend to be curious *about* specific things (that is, problems, anomalies, and puzzles). But wonder's focus on the *why of things* lends it a more pronounced metaphysical import than curiosity. Indeed, a question like, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" can only elicit the wonder that Plato called the "feeling of the philosopher and the beginning of all philosophy."<sup>77</sup> As we survey the history of science, Albert Einstein stands out as one who possessed this unique gift, postulating some of the most significant scientific theories of the twentieth century.

In Walter Isaacson's biography of Einstein, we get a revealing glimpse into the creative thought experiments that Einstein regularly employed in challenging existing presuppositions and in positing new versions of reality.<sup>78</sup> Isaacson describes Einstein's inner world in these terms:

He made imaginative leaps and discerned great principles through thought experiments rather than by methodical inductions based on experimental data. The theories that resulted were at times astonishing, mysterious, and counterintuitive, yet they contained notions that could capture the popular imagination: the relativity of space and time,  $E=mc^2$ , the bending of light beams, and the warping of space.<sup>79</sup>

But such "imaginative leaps" are only possible in someone who is able to go against the grain of established ways of thinking.

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<sup>76</sup>*Understanding and Being*, 235.

<sup>77</sup>Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155d.

<sup>78</sup>Some examples serve to illustrate this tendency in Einstein's approach to theorization. In describing the experience of the effects of gravity, Einstein asks us to imagine the experience of enclosure in an elevator moving through space. In describing what occurs in the four dimensional fabric of space and time, Einstein invites us to consider the experience of alternately rolling a bowling ball and billiard balls on the soft, two dimensional surface of a trampoline. In demonstrating how two seemingly simultaneous events do not appear as such to another observer (who happens to be moving rather quickly), Einstein proposes a case in which lightning bolts strike the embankment of train tracks at two separate places when we are standing midway between them. What would we see?

<sup>79</sup>Walter Isaacson, *Einstein: His Life and Universe* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2007), 5.

Independent in his thinking, he was driven by an imagination that broke from the confines of conventional wisdom. He was that odd breed, a reverential rebel, and he was guided by a faith . . . in a God who would not play dice by allowing things to happen by chance.<sup>80</sup>

Wonder goes hand in hand with imagination. Yet imagination presupposes an ability to engage in the very "picturing" that Lonergan himself critiques. For Lonergan (as I observed earlier), such an epistemological model generates an unnecessary dichotomy between the inner world of the knower and the outer world encompassing what is known. But this objection must be qualified in light of the way in which a thinker like Einstein formulated his greatest and most far-reaching insights.

By its very nature, imagination allows us to "see" beyond the world we take for granted. In this respect, Lonergan is correct in his contention that scientific knowledge involves more than merely "taking a look at" the givenness of experience. Indeed, scientists cannot dispense with that deeper intuitive vision that enables them (and by extension, the human community) to "see" our world (and ourselves) from fresh perspectives. In a very real sense, then, the revolutionary (paradigm-shattering) scientist must be a genuine "visionary" with a binary focus: on the one hand, a focus on the here-and-now world of commonsense experience; on the other hand, a focus upon a heretofore "unseen" world of possibilities that have the potential to expand our intellectual horizons in ways that far exceed our immediate reckoning.

Lonergan describes such illuminating transformations in intellectual perspective in terms of the emergence of a "higher viewpoint," that is, "a complex shift in the whole structure of insights, definitions, postulates, deductions, and applications..."<sup>81</sup> What precipitates this "complex shift?" On its most basic level, it proceeds from a gathering of insights and their application to concrete problems. But the very recognition of the deficiencies of that outlook opens the way to their superseding, by the "higher viewpoint." In this respect, the "higher viewpoint" rises above the drawbacks of its predecessors.

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<sup>80</sup>Einstein, 4.

<sup>81</sup>Insight, 13.

Single insights occur either in isolation or in related fields. In the latter case, they combine, cluster, coalesce, into the mystery of a subject; they ground sets of definitions, postulates, deductions; they admit applications to enormous ranges of instances. But the matter does not end there. Still further insights arise. The shortcomings of the previous position become recognized. New definitions and postulates are devised. A new and larger field of deductions is set up. Broader and more accurate applications become possible.<sup>82</sup>

For Lonergan, then, scientific understanding entails an integration of sensation/imagining with intellectual insight. While insight is rooted in the world of sense experience (and the imagination it stimulates), it transcends it in our formulation of purely intelligible content. Sensibility and intelligibility are inseparable.

So fine a detachment, so rigorous a disinterestedness, is a sheer leap into the void for the existential subject. He is quite intelligent; he is eager for insight; but the insight he wants is . . . the grasp of intelligibility in the concrete presentations of his own experience.<sup>83</sup>

While wonder finds a ready outlet in the knowable, it also attunes the investigator to what is ultimately unknowable, that is, to the mystery of being itself.

Though the field of mystery is contracted by the advance of knowledge, it cannot be eliminated from human living. There always is the further question. Though metaphysics can grasp the structure of possible science and the ultimate contours of proportionate being, this

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<sup>82</sup>*Insight*, 13. Elsewhere, Lonergan stresses the role of the attainment of the "higher viewpoint" in countering the negative effects of bias (*Insight*, 234): "Inquiry and insight are facts that underlie mathematics, empirical science, and common sense. The refusal of insight is a fact that accounts for individual and group egoism, for the psychoneuroses, and for the ruin of nations and civilizations. The needed higher viewpoint is the discovery, the logical expansion and the recognition of the principle that intelligence contains its own immanent norms and... unless common sense can learn to overcome its bias by acknowledging and submitting to a higher principle, unless common sense can be taught to resist its perpetual temptation to adopt the easy, obvious, practical compromise, then one must expect the succession of ever less comprehensive viewpoints and in the limit the destruction of all that has been achieved."

<sup>83</sup>*Insight*, 539.



concentration only serves to put more clearly and distinctly the question of transcendent being. And if that question meets with answers, will not the answers give rise to further questions?<sup>84</sup>

In assessing the scope of human knowledge, Lonergan addresses the paradoxical notion of the "known unknown," as reflected in our capacity to discern what we do not know (and indeed, may never know completely), but nonetheless strive to know by the posing of critical questions.

We have equated being with the objective of the pure desire to know, with what is to be known through the totality of intelligent and reasonable answers. But, in fact, our questions outnumber our answers, so that we know of an unknown through our unanswered questions.<sup>85</sup>

Lonergan's treatment of the "known unknown" introduces something of an apophatic dimension into his analysis of our cognitive range that assumes as much relevance for theology as it does for the sciences. The fact that we can recognize what we do not know provides an incentive to press our investigations into new, uncharted regions. As questions generate more and more questions, the inquiring mind submits to what Lonergan designates "the necessity of dynamic images [partly symbols and partly signs] . . . which make sensible to human sensitivity what human intelligence reaches for or grasps."<sup>86</sup> In this connection, he defines "dynamic images" as "mysteries" in their own right. Accordingly, "dynamic images" draw upon the rich reservoir of sense experience, but point beyond it in our quest for intelligibility.

Because human understanding and judgment, decision and belief, are the higher integration of sensitive contents and activities, the intelligent and rational contents and directives lie in the sensitive field.<sup>87</sup>

In Lonergan's interpretation, "dynamic images" provide the nexus uniting what we derive from empirical observation and a higher conceptual

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<sup>84</sup>*Insight*, 546.

<sup>85</sup>*Insight*, 531-32.

<sup>86</sup>*Insight*, 547-48.

<sup>87</sup>*Insight*, 548.

rendering of the "known unknown".

William A. Matthews delineates the role of such images in these terms:

As our human intellectual potential advances in knowledge, there still remains the notion of the unknown. It follows that no matter how intellectually advanced humankind is in its pursuit of the unknown, it always stands in need of dynamic images that function on the sensitive level as symbols and as signs of that orientation.<sup>88</sup>

## 9. CONCLUSION

Loneragan's analysis of the "known unknown" affirms something crucial about human nature itself. In a very real sense, mystery is part and parcel of the unrestricted character of the mind. If we stand in need of "dynamic images" in coming to grips with mystery, it is because we are already deeply receptive to what must always elude our attempts at complete explanation. Our intellectual orientation toward an infinite horizon of being underscores this receptivity. In this respect, the significance of Lonergan's critique of the "picturing" model of knowing comes into sharper focus. From Lonergan's standpoint, the mind's confrontation with mystery cannot depend exclusively upon what it derives from the external world of sense experience. This is why it must rely upon "dynamic images" in formulating insights that transcend empirical data, even as they draw upon its content. In Kanaris's reckoning, "mystery is . . . the known unknown but integrated at a higher level of intellectual activity."<sup>89</sup>

It is significant, I think, that when Lonergan refers to "curiosity" in *Insight*, he tends to qualify that term by means of the preceding adjective "intellectual" (that is, "intellectual curiosity").<sup>90</sup> In so doing, he implicitly contrasts "intellectual curiosity" with what I would characterize as "mere curiosity." For Lonergan, as we have seen, "intellectual curiosity" is an

<sup>88</sup>William A. Matthews, *Loneragan's Quest: A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 405. In this context, Jim Kanaris (*Bernard Lonergan's Philosophy of Religion: From Philosophy of God to Philosophy of Religious Studies* [Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002], 84) distinguishes the "dynamic image" as "symbol" (whereby the image is connected with the "known unknown") from its role as "sign" (whereby the image is associated with an interpretation that explicates the significance of the image).

<sup>89</sup>Jim Kanaris, *Bernard Lonergan's Philosophy of Religion: From Philosophy of God to Philosophy of Religious Studies*, 86.

<sup>90</sup>Compare with *Insight*, 9; 284; 285.

expression of "the pure, detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know." Such desire not only embraces the knowable, but the "known unknown" as well. Accordingly, it assumes a natural orientation toward the mystery inherent in being. In this connection, Lonergan's notion of "intellectual curiosity" finds a parallel in the virtue of *studiositas*.

St. Augustine provides a major source for the classical Christian interpretation of *studiositas*, especially in regard to the contrast he draws between the studious and the curious dispositions. In a manner consistent with what we find in Lonergan concerning the mind's receptivity to the "known unknown," Augustine designates the mark of the studious spirit in its desire to know what one does not know. But Augustine also stresses (and Lonergan, I believe, would readily endorse this contention) that studious individuals differ from the curious to the extent that those who are studious have a motive for what they seek. One does not seek the unknown for its own sake, but for its potential cognitive value. For Augustine, if someone is "so curious that he is carried away by the mere love of knowing unknown things for no known reason, such a curious man is indeed to be distinguished from the studious man."<sup>91</sup>

From this standpoint, "mere curiosity" amounts to no more than a "taking a look at" those things that strike someone as novel, unusual, or intriguing. "Intellectual curiosity" (or alternately, "wonder"), on the other hand, is conducive to that deeper vision which strives for the truth of things. Such striving presupposes the application of what we derive from our immediate experience of the empirical world to those cognitive activities (that is, understanding and judgment) which yield knowledge. In this way, Lonergan provides a compelling strategy for overcoming the dichotomy between the subjective and the objective which has haunted the Western intellectual tradition from Descartes onward.<sup>92</sup> For Lonergan, the objectivity

<sup>91</sup>St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* X,1,3 (trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. in *The Works of Saint Augustine* [Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991]): CC L(SL) 314,111-315,114: *Aut si tam curiosus est ut non propter aliquam notam causam sed solo amore rapiatur incognita sciendi, discernendus quidem est ab studiosi nomine iste curiosus.* For a more detailed treatment of Augustine's distinction between *studiositas* and *curiositas*, see my *Restless Mind. Curiositas and the Scope of Inquiry in Saint Augustine's Psychology* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2013), 233-36; 240-41.

<sup>92</sup>Vernon Gregson, "The Desire to Know: Intellectual Conversion," in Vernon Gregson (ed.), *The Desires of the Human Heart. An Introduction to the Theology of Bernard Lonergan* (New York, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 26: "It might seem strange, given the commonly accepted division between subjectivity and objectivity, that the more one employs the full range of one's subjectivity, the more objective are one's conclusions, but it is in fact true."



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of true being is only disclosed through the mediation of the intellectual activity of the inquiring mind and the mind's contribution to what is known. If, as Proust claims, discovery demands the possession of "other eyes," then Lonergan demonstrates the degree to which scientific understanding requires a conceptual "lens" through which our vision of the external world of sense experience assumes its clarity, intelligibility, and meaning.

## DELIBERATIVE INSIGHT REVISITED

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TWENTY YEARS AGO I PUBLISHED AN ESSAY that proposed a moderately detailed Lonerganian elaboration of value judgments.<sup>1</sup> Making value judgments is an activity that the later writings of Bernard Lonergan emphasize as utterly central to human living. Nonetheless the account of that activity provided by those writings is surprisingly sketchy in certain key respects, and that sketchiness in turn was leading to confusing differences in the interpretation and application of the later Lonergan's ideas.<sup>2</sup> Hence my intention was to contribute to a more ample account that would be consonant with Lonergan's overall perspective and thus help eliminate the confusion. The core of my elaboration<sup>3</sup> included a portrayal of the pivotal step in value judging, namely, grasping evidence as sufficient for affirming a prospective value judgment as virtually unconditioned. I also proposed a fresh label for that step. By analogy with "reflective insight" as Lonergan's label for grasping evidence as sufficient in the process of *fact* judging, I suggested "deliberative insight" as a fitting label for the corresponding step in the process of *value* judging.

During the intervening years, many additional discussions of Lonergan's account of value judging have appeared in print, some of them referring (whether in agreement or in disagreement) to some element of my own essay.<sup>4</sup> Helped partly by those discussions, I have both refined and further

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<sup>1</sup>"Judgments of Value, for the Later Lonergan," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995): 221-48.

<sup>2</sup>For more on the sketchiness and the differing interpretations and applications it was engendering, see "Judgments of Value, for the Later Lonergan," 222, and note 7.

<sup>3</sup>"Judgments of Value, for the Later Lonergan," 223-41.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Mark Doorley, *The Place of the Heart in Lonergan's Ethics: The Role of Feelings in the Ethical Intentionality Analysis of Bernard Lonergan* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996); and "Resting in Reality: Reflections on Crowe's 'Complacency and

developed my earlier portrayal of value judging's pivotal step and the label I suggested for designating it.

My aim in this paper is to share that updated portrayal.<sup>5</sup> The paper's three parts discuss in turn the transcendental intention of value, judgments of value, and deliberative insights. Although I employ the expression "deliberative insight" from the beginning of my account, in the third main part I offer a justification for that usage. Moreover, in order to highlight what I deem my primary contentions regarding this topic, throughout the paper I limit the text largely to those contentions, relegating certain important related but nonetheless secondary contentions to (sometimes lengthy) footnotes.

# 1. THE TRANSCENDENTAL INTENTION OF VALUE

Intentionality analysis is my enterprise of studying my acts of knowing and choosing with the aim of articulating their phenomenal features, epistemic status, and ontological implications.<sup>6</sup> In such an enterprise, what emerges as

Concern," *Lonergan Workshop Journal* 13 (1997), 33-55; Brian Cronin, "Deliberative Insights: A Sketch," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 22 (2004), 23-55; and *Value Ethics: A Lonergan Perspective* (Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy, 2006); William Sullivan, *The Eye of the Heart: Knowing the Human Good in the Euthanasia Debate* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 137-200; Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, *Envisioning a Methodical Theology of Grace: Exercises in Transposition Spanning the Early and Later Writings of Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, doctoral dissertation, Toronto School of Theology, 2008, 204-20; and Patrick Byrne, "What Is Our Scale of Value Preference?" *Lonergan Workshop* 21 (2009), 43-64; and "Which Scale of Value Preference? Lonergan, Scheler, von Hildebrand, and Doran," in John Dadosky, ed., *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran, SJ* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 19-49. I also have been privileged to read two chapters of an emerging manuscript by Byrne entitled *The Ethics of Discernment*. Among other things, those chapters provide rich and detailed analyses of moral responses in concrete situations; and I look forward to reading the book when it is published.

<sup>5</sup>Like the previous portrayal, my present one is "Lonerganian" in that it relies on Lonergan's writings but aims to extend them in certain respects.

<sup>6</sup>Some readers may find two related expansions useful at this point. First, the goal of intentionality analysis may be expressed more precisely as formulating, verifying, and validating the explanatory phenomenal intelligibility of the data of intentional consciousness, their epistemic intelligibility, and the ontological implications of the latter. See, for example, Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 25, 96, 289, 340-43; and *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980*, vol. 17 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 85, 167-68, 190, 387, 395-98.

Second, Frederick Crowe, perhaps Lonergan's best-known expositor, has drawn attention in a number of essays to the later Lonergan's contention that understanding our data of consciousness is problematic in a way that earlier he had not fully appreciated. The problem is



the fundamental methodical antecedent of my acts is my threefold intending of successive and utterly unrestricted or "transcendental" objectives. This threefold transcendental intending is mere intending, mere yearning, mere desiring, not yet knowing or choosing. It is innate, inherent, possessed naturally. It is pure, prior to any cognitional or decisional determination. And it constitutes complementary poles of my basic horizon. First, as *dynamic tendency* it is the subjective pole of my basic horizon, the boundless intending that at most is just partially expressed in any question I ask. Second, as *what dynamic tendency anticipates* it is the objective pole of my basic horizon, the unbounded intended field within which is situated every content of awareness that I ask questions about.<sup>7</sup>

The first of the transcendental objectives I intend is what would fully satisfy my unlimited eagerness to understand coherently, an eagerness partially expressed by such questions as *what, why, where, when, and how often*. This first transcendental intention provides the fundamental meanings I give to the words "intelligent" and "intelligible"; and it is the radical anticipation by virtue of which I recognize and conceive formal intelligibilities within the

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that insight is into phantasms, images; but while we have images of our data of sense, we have no images of our data of consciousness. The solution Crowe claims to find incipiently given by Lonergan himself, a solution that Crowe develops more fully and affirms as quite adequate, is that the aspiring self-knower can discover "stand-in" images for the data of her consciousness. Such "dummies" [Lonergan's word] are imaginable contents or linguistic tokens that are *associated with* our data of consciousness as *symbols* of them. Hence we are able to understand ourselves mediately through insight into those symbols. (See Frederick Crowe, *Lonergan and the Level of Our Time* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010], xi, 53, 80, 83-95, 132n14, 141, 155-79, 413.)

In my own view, (1) the problem is a genuine one, but (2) Crowe's account of it is accurate and the solution he proposes is indeed adequate. However, other views on both points have been voiced within the community of Lonergan scholars in recent years, a fact that must be admitted. (For example, see Eric James Morelli, "Insight and the Subject," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 51 [2011]: 137-48.) In the present paper I am assuming the employment of Crowe's "solution" whenever I speak of understanding the data of consciousness, though I do not indicate this assumption each time in my text. Moreover, I recognize that various points I make here would need adjustment if further investigation of this issue turns out to manifest my acceptance of Crowe's account as unsustainable.

<sup>7</sup>On the distinction of my basic horizon into subjective and objective poles, see Bernard Lonergan, "Metaphysics as Horizon," in *Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 4 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 188-204, at 198-99; and "Cognitional Structure," in *Collection*, 205-21, at 211-13. Compare with *Method in Theology*, 11-12, 23-24, 34-35, 73, 263, 282. The fundamental categorial determinations of the subjective pole, of the relation between the subjective and objective poles, and of the objective pole respectively would seem to be what are expressed by the answers to Lonergan's "three basic questions." (See, for example, *Method in Theology*, 25, 83, 261, 297, 316; compare with *Collection*, 203-204 and editorial notes k and l.)

potential intelligibilities I encounter.

The second transcendental objective I intend presupposes and sublates or recontextualizes<sup>8</sup> the first one. It is what would totally fulfill my unlimited straining to judge correctly, a straining partially expressed by such questions as *is it, is this true, is that really so*. This second transcendental intention provides the fundamental meanings I give to the words "reasonable" and "real"; and it is the ultimate criterion for my attribution of reality to the instances of formal intelligibility I encounter.

The third transcendental objective I intend presupposes and recontextualizes the second one and thus the first one as well. It is what would satiate my unlimited craving to judge and choose rightly, a craving partially expressed by such questions as *ought it be, is this truly good, is that more choiceworthy, and what should I do*. This third transcendental intention provides the fundamental meanings I give to the words "responsible" and "valuable"; and it is the ultimate criterion for my attribution of value, transcategorical goodness,<sup>9</sup> to the instances of reality I encounter.

Next, let us say that my transcendental intention of value as distinct from my transcendental intentions of intelligibility and reality is *discrete*, and that as subsuming those intentions it is *subsumptive*. It follows that my transcendental intention of value as *subsumptive* is the *unitary* fundamental methodical antecedent of my acts of knowing and choosing. For it constitutes my innate, inherent, naturally-possessed basic horizon, the radical normative anticipatory field of unrestrictedly (intelligent and reasonable and) responsible intending and unrestricted intended (intelligibility and reality and) value, the foundational prescriptive heuristic field within which

<sup>8</sup>"To sublate" and "to be sublated by (or on or within)" express the same act from the standpoints of agent and patient respectively. "To recontextualize" and "to be recontextualized by (or on or within)" express the same distinction in different words. For the purposes of this paper, the latter terminology is more congenial. (For a fuller account of the act, see *Method in Theology*, 241; compare with 120, 316, 340.)

<sup>9</sup>Just as one may distinguish potential, formal, and actual *intelligibility*, for example, so too one may distinguish potential, formal, and actual *goodness*. In both cases, "actual" means "transcendental" in the scholastic sense of "transcategorical." As objectives of our intending, transcendental intelligibility, truth, reality, and goodness are "mutually convertible": distinct *just notionally* from one another. On the hand, such merely notional distinctions are far from insignificant, for they are reflected in the different modes of our intending and the different steps of our knowing. See, for example, Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 81, 127-28. Compare with chapter 18 of *Insight* (Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 3 of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); also *Method in Theology*, 47-52, 184, 359-61.



all the acts and contents of my knowing and choosing emerge.

Nonetheless, my *naturally-possessed* basic horizon is not necessarily my *existential* basic horizon. For although I ought to shape my acts of knowing and choosing in fidelity to my naturally possessed basic horizon, I am free to make some other horizon existentially basic. I ought to commit myself to always proceeding (intelligently and reasonably and) responsibly, but I remain quite free to proceed otherwise. In short, the key issue in my concrete human living is not simply the cognitional and decisional norms I naturally possess but the ones I choose to follow. This is the issue of inauthenticity and authenticity, and ultimately of unconversion and conversion.

For the sake of a clearer and more manageable exposition within the limits of a relatively short paper, in the remaining parts I assume that the subject under discussion is proceeding authentically unless otherwise indicated. Thus I largely prescind from the topic of unconversion and conversion.

## 2. JUDGMENTS OF VALUE

Let us now shift our attention from transcendental intentions to the processes that lead to the respective incremental determinations of those intentions. More precisely, our focus in the remainder of this paper will be the processes leading to determinations that are proportionate rather than transcendent,<sup>10</sup> and merely cognitional rather than also decisional: proportionate conceptual formulations, judgments of fact, and judgments of value.

### 2.1. *The General Structure of Human Intelligence*

Cognitional activities on the second level of the formally dynamic four-level structure that is my human knowing, the level of intelligence, presuppose and sublate or recontextualize<sup>11</sup> cognitional activities on the first level, the level of experience.

Strictly speaking, my primary activities on the level of *experience* do not make up a process, an ordered sequence of distinct and interrelated acts that advances from a beginning to an end. For those primary activities are my intentional acts of *sensing*, simultaneously cognitive and affective, which

<sup>10</sup>On this distinction, see *Insight*, 416.

<sup>11</sup>See above, note 8.



are related to their contents immediately rather than mediately: the shapes, colors, sounds, smells, and so forth that are the data of sense.<sup>12</sup> Even less is my *conscious* experience a process. For it is not even an activity but simply that property of my intentional acts which makes me primitively and non-intentionally aware of those acts and, more fundamentally, of myself as actor.<sup>13</sup>

2.1.1. *The Three Stages.* By contrast, cognitional activities on the level of *intelligence* do make up a process, a process that unfolds in three stages: inquiring, having direct insights, and conceiving. The first stage is initiated by a "question for inquiry" that emerges when I consider certain data of sense or consciousness and wonder about their intelligibility. "What is this?" "How do these data hang together intelligibly?" This question recontextualizes the data, situating them within the horizon of my first transcendental intention, constituting their sublation by the second level, and transforming them from mere contents of experience into potential contents of understanding. Second, as I pursue my inquiry about the data, at some point an intelligent "aha" event occurs: I have a direct insight. Perhaps I even have more than one. I discover one or more concrete intelligible unities or relations in the data, intelligible forms that provide alternative concrete answers to my question but where the distinction between the intelligible content grasped and my act of grasping it has not yet emerged. Third, intelligently compelled by each direct insight, I formulate a corresponding concept, an essence, a

<sup>12</sup>I prescind for the moment from my secondary activities on the level of sense, namely, my acts of sentient remembering and imagining.

<sup>13</sup>A slightly fuller account of the "first level" of my cognitional process, the "level of experience," may be helpful to some readers. First, there are two modes of cognitional process. In its direct – or, more clearly, **extrospective** – mode, my cognitional process is oriented toward knowledge of things distinct from myself as subject. In its **introspective** mode, it is oriented toward knowledge of myself as subject. Second, in the extrospective mode, the data of experience are the *contents* of my conscious-intentional acts – more precisely, **data of sense**, the contents of my *sensitive* acts. Correlatively, my experience of such data is **intentional** – more precisely, *sensitively intentional*. Third, in the introspective mode, by contrast, the data of experience are my conscious-intentional *acts*, my **data of consciousness** – more precisely, my data of *sensitive, intelligent, rational, and moral* consciousness. (In this note I prescind from conscious *states*.) Correlatively, my experience of such data is **conscious** – more precisely, *sensitively, intelligently, rationally, and morally* conscious.

Perhaps it will be clear from these observations that such expressions as the "first level" of my cognitional process and the "level of experience" are generalizations that omit rather than convey certain important but distinct specific features of cognitional process in its respective extrospective and introspective modes. Such generalizations are of course useful in their own right, but a noetic phenomenology that aspires to be concrete must probe beneath them. (More on these matters may be found, for example, in *Insight*, 299-300, and in *Collection*, 208-11.)

"simple inner word" that more or less abstractly objectifies the concrete and unobjectified intelligible content of the insight, making it explicit precisely as content. Each formulated essence is an abstract unificational or relational synthesis of as much of the data-as-imagined as the formulation requires for expressing the insight's content.

2.1.2. *An Example.* With apologies to the author of *Insight*, let me illustrate what I have just written by adapting and extending an example that appears in chapter 11. Late one afternoon Deanna returns home from her day job and finds her workshop a mess. Drill bits and socket wrenches are scattered hither and yon, paint from overturned cans has formed a multicolored puddle in the middle of her workbench, her table saw gives off the acrid smell of electrical burnout, and the certificate recognizing her M.A. degree in philosophy from Loyola Marymount University is lying on the floor in a pool of motor oil. Taking account of her collection of remembered data and present data, she wonders, "Since my workshop was tidy this morning, why is it messy now? What caused this change?"<sup>14</sup> For a time, Deanna puzzles over her collection of data. Eventually she has three different intelligent "aha" moments: she grasps three distinct ways of accounting for the difference between what she saw and smelled in her workshop earlier and what she sees and smells now. First, in a *positive* direct insight, within the data she grasps a concrete intelligible relation that is merely intelligible, the relation of the mess to an extrinsic *natural* cause. Then, in successive *interpretative* direct insights, she grasps two concrete intelligible relations that are not just intelligible but humanly meaningful, relations of the mess to distinct extrinsic *intentional* causes. Finally, she formulates three concepts corresponding respectively to the three concrete intelligible relations she has grasped: "earthquake," "thief," and "vindictive acquaintance."

The foregoing example's final step requires a small clarification. Given Deanna's life experience, we may assume that she was already well acquainted with the concepts "earthquake," "thief," and "vindictive

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<sup>14</sup>For the purposes of this example, I assume that Deanna has made two prior fact judgments: "a change has occurred in my workshop", and "its result is this mess." These set up her search for further intelligibility, an answer to the question "what caused the change that resulted in this mess?" With this question her curiosity moves from the *internal* causes of the mess in her workshop to its *external* causes. (On this distinction, see, for example, Bernard Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological and Constitution of Christ*, vol. 7 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Michael G. Shields, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 47, 89.



acquaintance." Consequently, her move from direct insight to concept in each case was undoubtedly a matter of bringing the concretely understood situation under a familiar concept rather than producing the concept for the first time. The ideal example would illustrate Deanna's original formulation of each concept, a formulation that would have been preceded by one or more direct insights. For, as indicated above, the cognitively *basic* intelligibles we grasp are unformulated, unexpressed, unobjectified, the contents of direct insights, not the contents of concepts. Conceptual contents, whether more or less abstract, general, universal, or concrete, individual, particular, are cognitively *derivative* intelligibles. They are produced by our activity of intelligently formulating, expressing, objectifying the preconceptual intelligible contents we grasp by direct insights, activity to which those preconceptual contents move us. The large significance of this fact will become obvious in the paper's final main section.

## 2.2. The General Structure of Human Rationality

*Preliminary Clarificational Excursus.* Before discussing cognitional activities on the third and fourth levels of my intentional consciousness, let me distinguish two ways in which my cognitional process can be present to me. First, it can be present simply insofar as it is *lived* by me, experienced in and through my performance of the acts that comprise it. Second, it can be present insofar as it also is *cognitionally objectified* by me, known by me, understood and judged and evaluated by me.<sup>15</sup>

This distinction usefully complements what I have already said about the first and second levels, but it is especially important for avoiding a confusion in interpreting what I will say shortly about the third and fourth levels. For on my accounts, the reflection and reflective insight in my lived third-level cognitional process are *reflexive*, focused on certain cognitional acts and contents that are already present; and so too are the deliberation and deliberative insight in my lived fourth-level process. Moreover, my cognitional objectification – my understanding, judging, and evaluating – of my cognitional process also is reflexive in the sense just mentioned, for it is

<sup>15</sup>Corresponding to distinct kinds of questions I can ask about my cognitional process, there are distinct kinds of cognitional objectification I can undertake. Three examples: I can objectify my cognitional process implicitly, or explicitly and descriptively, or explicitly and explanatorily. However, such subdistinctions are not significant for the paper's argument at this point.



likewise focused on cognitional acts and contents that are already present.

However, it is important not to confuse (1) the *lived* reflexivity of the reflection, reflective insight, deliberation, and deliberative insight that are *components* of my lived process of knowing anything and (2) the *introspective* reflexivity of my *process* of knowing the lived process. The introspective process includes introspective direct insight into my lived experiences of reflection and reflective insight and of deliberation and deliberative insight; and it is followed by introspective reflective insight and fact judgment, and introspective deliberative insight and value judgment. (More generally, the introspective process is what culminates in explanatory cognitional self-appropriation.)

One implication of the foregoing is that testing the accuracy of my proposed introspective account of deliberative insight is not fundamentally a matter of comparing it with another introspective account (whether someone else's or even one's own). Rather, it is fundamentally a matter of comparing it with one's own lived experience of grasping the evidence on which one's value judgments are based, the experience my account purports to express.

Let us now return to our discussion of the four levels on which knowing unfolds. Just as cognitional activities on the second level presuppose and recontextualize those on the first, so those on the third level, the level of *rationality*, presuppose and recontextualize those on the second. Moreover, just as on the second level, so also the activities on the third level unfold in a three-stage process, though of course the stages are not identical with the previous ones.

**2.2.1. The First Stage.** The three stages of my third-level process are lived reflecting, having reflective insight, and fact judging. The first of these stages is launched by a "question for reflection" that arises when I consider each concept, each simple inner word, each formulated essence with which my second-level process concluded and wonder about its reality. "Is this real?" "Does this thing exist?" or "Does this property occur?" This "whether" question of fact recontextualizes each formulated essence, situating it within the horizon of my second transcendental intention, constituting its sublation by the third level and transforming it from a mere formulated essence into a potential content of rational affirmation. That is to say, the question envisions each formulated essence as the subject of a fact judgment that is *conditioned* – more precisely, the subject of a proposition ("this thing or property is real")

that is *conditionally* or *potentially* or *hypothetically* true.

Continuing my lived reflecting, I search for evidence that would be sufficient for a rational answer to each question for reflection. A first element of evidence emerges when I consider each direct insight that in my second-level process was the intelligible pivot between the data of experience and the corresponding conceptual synthesis. In that intelligent process, the *experienced* data in which I grasped one or more intelligible forms I then included as *imagined* data in each formulated essence to the extent required for expressing what I grasped in the corresponding insight. Now, in my rational process, each direct insight as recontextualized becomes the (intelligible and) rational connection or link between each conditionally true judgment of fact (each "compound inner word of fact") and its cognitional condition of being *unconditionally* or *actually* or *absolutely* true.<sup>16</sup>

In any given instance the link may be particular to that instance. Or it may be an abstract generalization of previous fact judgments about concrete individuals. For example, the "laws" of physics are abstract generalizations of certain previous fact judgments about concrete individual material things and events.<sup>17</sup> But in every instance the link emerges within an underlying pattern that is both far more general than any particular link and far more concrete than any abstract generalization. That pattern is part of the normative immanent and operative structure of my inherent rationality; it is a concrete dynamic "if . . . , then . . ." procedure that is a naturally-given functional facet of the rational subject I am. It establishes the basic features of all particular third-level links and their generalizations. More precisely, it mandates that any conditionally true judgment of fact ("this thing or property is real") is unconditionally true if the *imagined* data that are a component of the formulated essence ("this thing or property") are data I *experience*. An apt articulation of that normative pattern might be something like the following: "If I experience the thing or property I have conceived,

<sup>16</sup>More precisely, the unconditionality, actuality, absoluteness here (and subsequently) is virtual, participative, dependent, not formal, natural, essential. (See, for example, chapter 2 of *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 2 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). For present purposes I deem it unnecessary to emphasize that distinction and stylistically cleaner to avoid doing so.

<sup>17</sup>To be sure, this way of expressing the point is an idealization. For scientific laws typically are abstract generalizations of concrete fact judgments made not by a single investigator but by a community of investigators, where the basis of the community is everyone's trust in everyone else's commitment to the same investigative standards.



then that thing or property is real."

The second element of evidence emerges when I review the data I initially experienced and in which I subsequently grasped one or more intelligible forms. Now, however, I regard those data from the perspective of third-level cognitional process: as recontextualized within a further part of the normative structure of my inherent rationality. From this perspective, they are manifested as more or less completely and definitively fulfilling or not fulfilling the specified cognitional conditions of the respective conditioned judgments.

To reiterate, then, in the first stage of my lived third-level cognitional process I review and recontextualize three elements within a naturally-given normative pattern of such elements, where the new context emerges as soon as I complement my earlier question ("What is this?") with a new one ("Is this real?"). As originating on the first and second levels, the three elements belong to the *formulational* process that begins with data as experienced, proceeds to one or more direct insights that intelligibly unify or relate the data, and concludes with formulations of one or more essences that express abstractly what the insights grasped concretely. As recontextualized on the third level, by contrast, the three elements belong to the *verificational* process that in its first stage moves in the opposite direction. It begins with one or more conditioned judgments of fact (the recontextualized abstract essences). It proceeds to a rational connection or link between each judgment and its cognitional condition of being unconditionally true (the recontextualized direct insights). And it concludes with the more or less complete and definitive experienced fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the conditions specified hypothetically by the respective links (the recontextualized data as experienced). Lonergan sometimes refers to the second and third of these steps as "marshaling" the evidence for the unconditional truth of a judgment.<sup>18</sup>

**2.2.2. The Second Stage.** The second stage of my third-level process consists of one or more rational "aha" events: I have one or more reflective insights. Whereas a direct insight grasps the *intelligible unity or relation* of data I experience, a reflective insight grasps the (intelligible and) *rational sufficiency* of evidential elements I marshal. Pondering the rational link that

<sup>18</sup>For example, *Insight*, 304; *Collection*, 207, 209, 211; *Method in Theology*, 101-102. Compare with *Insight*, 300-301, 402-409; *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 274-75; *Method in Theology*, 263.



specifies the cognitional condition whose fulfillment would establish the conditioned judgment of fact as unconditioned, plus my experience of how that condition is or is not fulfilled, I grasp the extent to which the condition is fulfilled – identically the extent to which the unconditionality of the judgment is implicitly established. Lonergan sometimes speaks of having a reflective insight as “weighing” the evidence for the unconditional truth of a judgment.<sup>19</sup> Such weighing can have any of five main possible outcomes.<sup>20</sup>

First, the cognitional condition is grasped as *definitively fulfilled* insofar as all the pertinent questions about the truth of the conditioned judgment of fact have been answered positively. That is to say, there remains no pertinent challenge to the adequacy of the formulation that judgment would assert, or the accuracy of the direct insight that formulation expresses, or the completeness of the data whose intelligibility that insight grasps. In this case, the judgment is displayed as *certainly* unconditionally true.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>See above, note 18.

<sup>20</sup>For the background of the following account, see *Insight*, 573-75; compare with 90, 308-312, 324-26, 339-40.

<sup>21</sup>Though it is not essential to our present discussion, for the sake of completeness let me distinguish two ways in which pertinent challenges to the truth of a conditioned judgment of fact may be ruled out. When the formulation that the fact judgment would assert expresses an insight into data of *sense* (e.g., “this man is my father”), a challenge that initially seems pertinent (e.g., “perhaps this man is not my father after all”) might eventually be excluded as *unreasonable*. For a challenge shown to be clearly at odds with an insight into all the relevant data available is a challenge without evidence; and a challenge without evidence is unreasonable. Nonetheless such a challenge can never be excluded as *unthinkable*, for one can never totally dismiss the possibility that further data will become available at some point and lead to a very different insight.

By contrast, when the formulation that the judgment of fact would assert expresses an insight into data of *consciousness* (e.g., “I am conscious”), a challenge that initially seems pertinent (e.g., “perhaps I am utterly unconscious”) may be excluded not just as unreasonable but as concretely *unthinkable*. For in this case the insight is into one or more aspects of my acts of attending, questioning, having insights, formulating, judging, evaluating, and deciding; and my provisional denial of those aspects (e.g., their consciousness) is contradicted by my experience of those very aspects in my performance of offering that denial. Subsequent reflection on the performance brings the contradiction to light and manifests the challenge as concretely unable to be coherently thought and its opposite as concretely unable to be coherently denied.

In the first case, the “if . . . , then . . .” link of the formulation to its cognitional condition is *merely sufficient*; and when that condition is fulfilled, the certainty with which the judgment is displayed as unconditionally true is just *practical*. But in the second case, the “if . . . , then . . .” link of the formulation to its cognitional condition is *sufficient and necessary*; and when that condition is fulfilled, the certainty with which the judgment is displayed as unconditionally true is *incontrovertible*. (A similar version of the same basic distinction pertains to the fourth main possible outcome of weighing the evidence: the certainty with which a judgment is displayed as unconditionally false may be just *practical* or it may be *incontrovertible*.)

Finally, regarding the certainty of assertions, I should underscore that here and throughout

Second, the cognitional condition is grasped as *most likely fulfilled* insofar as some pertinent questions about the truth of the conditioned judgment of fact have been answered positively and positive answers to all the remaining pertinent questions seem more likely than not. Any remaining pertinent challenge regarding the formulation, the underlying direct insight, or the initial data seems solidly susceptible of being met. In this case, the judgment is displayed as *probably* unconditionally true.

Third, the cognitional condition is grasped as *most likely unfulfilled* insofar as a negative answer to at least one pertinent question about the truth of the conditioned judgment of fact seems more plausible than not. At least one pertinent challenge regarding the formulation, the underlying direct insight, or the initial data seems quite likely to be successful. In this case, the judgment is displayed as *probably* unconditionally false; or, equivalently, its contradictory is displayed as *probably* unconditionally true.

Fourth, the cognitional condition is grasped as *definitively unfulfilled* insofar as at least one pertinent question about the truth of the conditioned judgment of fact has been answered negatively. At least one pertinent challenge regarding the formulation, the underlying direct insight, or the initial data is clearly successful. In this case, the judgment is displayed as *certainly* unconditionally false; or, equivalently, its contradictory is displayed as *certainly* unconditionally true.

Fifth, whether the cognitional condition is fulfilled or unfulfilled is grasped as *obscure* insofar as the answers emergent thus far to the pertinent questions about the truth of the conditioned judgment of fact do not stand in any of the four preceding categories. It remains unclear whether or not all the pertinent challenges regarding the formulation, the underlying direct insight, or the initial data have been met or at least are solidly susceptible of being met. In this case, the judgment is displayed as *indeterminate*, as presently unable to be affirmed or denied.

2.2.3. *The Third Stage.* Finally, in the third stage of my third-level process, I follow through. Compelled (intelligently and) rationally by my one or more reflective insights, I assert each corresponding judgment of fact: "This thing

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this paper I limit my considerations to *judgments*, assertions based on evidence one grasps firsthand, rather than also considering *beliefs*, assertions based on evidence one grasps through the mediation of one or more other persons. (See, for example, *Insight*, 728-35; *Method in Theology*, 41-47, 118-19.) The topic of beliefs, including their certainty, is obviously an important focus in a proper account of concrete human living; but my present investigations are confined to the first and more basic topic.



or property certainly is real," "This thing or property probably is real," "This thing or property probably is not real," "This thing or property certainly is not real," and/or "Whether or not this thing or property is real remains to be determined." And in and through each assertion, I answer the "whether" question that initiated my reflection. I know the thing or property certainly or probably as real, or probably or certainly as not real, or as requiring further investigation in this respect.

2.2.4. *The Form of Reflective Insight.* In discussing the first stage of third-level cognitional process, I noted that the three elements generated in that stage emerge within a naturally-given pattern of such elements. But that pattern also extends to the second and third stages, thus underlying and governing every complete instance of third-level process. The following syllogism illustrates that integral underlying and governing pattern. It expresses the immanent and operative structure of my rational knowing. It formulates explanatorily the concrete conscious, intelligent, and rational intelligible that is my "form of reflective insight."<sup>22</sup>

If A, then B.

A.

Therefore B.

In this syllogism, the first line represents three factors of my second-level process as recontextualized and related within the horizon of the second transcendental intention. More exactly, *B* on the first line represents the fact judgment ("this thing or property is real") as conditionally, potentially, hypothetically true. *If A, then B* represents the rational link of that judgment to the cognitional condition of its being unconditionally, actually, absolutely true, namely my experience of the thing or property I have conceived. *A* on the first line represents that condition as specified by the link: the requisite experience as *imagined*. *A* on the second line represents the fulfillment of

<sup>22</sup>I draw here on *Insight*, 305-306. Moreover, following Lonergan, I interpret the syllogism not just logically but also as a means of communicating *direct* and *reflective* insights (see Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, vol. 5, of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 48-52). In another line, if one wishes to express the concrete "form of reflective insight" in metaphysical terms, it would seem that it is my central form (my formal entitative potency, my soul) insofar as it is differentiated by sensitive and intellectual conjugate forms (formal operative potencies). However, the limitations of such "metaphysical psychology" should be recognized. (See *Method in Theology*, 120, 340, 343; compare with 95-96, 258-59; also *Insight*, 538-43.)



the specified condition: my experience as *experienced*. The first two lines taken together represent the evidence as marshalled. *Therefore* represents the content of my reflective insight: the sufficiency of the evidence as weighed – identically the as-yet-unexpressed unconditional, actual, absolute truth of the fact judgment that the evidential sufficiency establishes. Finally, *B* on the third line represents the unconditionally, actually, absolutely true judgment of fact as asserted.

2.2.5. *An Example.* For a concrete illustration of the third-level cognitional process, let us pick up our earlier example at the point where Deanna has just arrived at the concepts “earthquake,” “thief,” and “vindictive acquaintance” as formulating the three different concrete intelligible relations she has grasped in the collection of remembered and presently experienced data pertaining to her workshop. She now asks herself, “Which of these bright ideas is the right idea? What actually caused this mess?” That question recontextualizes her three formulations on the third level as the subjects of three different potentially true judgments of fact (“an earthquake caused this mess,” “a thief caused this mess,” “a vindictive acquaintance caused this mess”).

Next, Deanna reflectively ponders each potentially true judgment’s rational link to its cognitional condition of being actually true. Although exhaustive links could well include countless details, manageable versions might be such generalizations as the following: “If the other rooms of my home and nearby homes are also topsy turvy, then an earthquake caused this mess”; “if at least one valuable item is missing from my workshop, then a thief caused this mess”; and “if the present data include some distinctive sign of a vindictive acquaintance, then that individual caused this mess.” She also reviews her present data and augments them by looking inside various drawers and cupboards in her workshop, checking other rooms of her home, and consulting with her neighbors.

Deanna’s following step is to compare the data specified by the respective rational links with the data she presently experiences. These comparisons lead to three successive reflective insights, which in turn impel her to assert three corresponding judgments of fact; and in and through those assertions she knows what *was not* the cause and what *was*. First, unattached items in her neighbors’ homes and in other rooms of her own home remain undisturbed, and even the loose contents of some cupboards in her workshop have not been moved. Consequently she concludes, “An earthquake did not

cause this mess." Second, despite their relative obviousness, none of the valuables she was storing in her workshop is missing: the iPad on the floor in its original box, the Rolex watch in the workbench drawer, and her small collection of rare coins in the cupboard. Consequently she concludes, "A thief did not cause this mess." Third, near one end of the workbench are two small markings made with fresh paint that matches part of the puddle. One marking is an image that commonly carries a hostile meaning: a closed hand with an upraised middle finger. The other is the letter "H," and the familiar script is that of the longtime boyfriend with whom Deanna recently broke off her relationship. Consequently she concludes, "Harry, my jilted boyfriend, caused this mess to take revenge on me."<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3. *The General Structure of Human Cognitive Morality*

Just as cognitional activities on the second level of my knowing presuppose and recontextualize those on the first, and those on the third level presuppose and recontextualize those on the second, so also cognitional activities on the fourth level, the level of *responsibility*, presuppose and recontextualize those on the third. Moreover, just as on the third level, so also the cognitional activities on the fourth level unfold in a three-stage process, though of course the steps are not identical with the previous ones but merely similar to them.

2.3.1. *The First Stage.* The three cognitional stages of my fourth-level process are lived deliberating, having deliberative insight, and value judging.<sup>24</sup> The first of these stages is initiated by a "question for deliberation" that emerges when I consider each reality with which my third-level process concluded and wonder about its value. "Is this reality a value? Is it actually, transcendently, transcategorially good?"<sup>25</sup> This "whether" question of value recontextualizes each reality, situating it within the horizon of my third transcendental intention, constituting its sublation by the fourth level and transforming it from a mere reality into a potential content of moral affirmation. That is to say, the question envisions each reality as the subject of a value judgment that is *conditioned* – more amply, the subject of

<sup>23</sup>Deanna's first conclusion is a judgment of *positive* fact – that her understanding of the intelligible data is correct. Her second and third conclusions are judgments of *interpretative* fact – that her interpretation of the signs, the data embodying meaning, is correct. And the certainty of all three of her judgments is merely *practical*, not *incontrovertible* (see above, note 21).

<sup>24</sup>Of course the fourth level also includes a decisional stage.

<sup>25</sup>Recall above, note 9.



a proposition ("this reality is a value") that is *conditionally* or *potentially* or *hypothetically true*.<sup>26</sup>

Continuing my lived deliberating, I search for evidence that would be sufficient for a moral answer to each question for deliberation. A first element of evidence emerges when I consider the link that in the third-level process was the rational connection between each conditionally true judgment of fact (each "compound inner word of fact") and its cognitional condition of being unconditionally true. In that rational process, the link mandated that the conditionally true judgment of fact ("this thing or property is real") is unconditionally true if the *imagined* data that belong to the formulated essence it would assert as real are data I also *experience*. Now, in my moral process, the rational link as recontextualized becomes the (rational and) moral connection or link between each conditionally true judgment of value (each "compound inner word of value") and its cognitional condition of being *unconditionally* or *actually* or *absolutely true*.<sup>27</sup>

In any given instance the link may be particular to that instance. Or it may be an abstract generalization of previous value judgments about concrete

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<sup>26</sup>On my reading of Lonergan, the question for deliberation is fundamentally about the *value* of an *intelligibility*, regardless of whether or not that intelligibility is a fact, a reality. In this respect it is similar to the question for reflection, which is fundamentally about the *reality* of an *intelligibility*. Hence with equal validity the question for deliberation could be posed before the question for reflection. But in such a sequence any eventual attribution of (actual) value to the intelligibility in and through an affirmative answer would also be the implicit attribution of (actual) reality. By contrast, in the present paper (as in my previous one) I follow the later Lonergan's usual practice of situating the question for reflection before the question for deliberation. Such a sequence better accords with the order commonly followed in the history of explicit philosophy. It also permits pedagogical clarity about the basic elements of our knowing of facts before treating our knowing of values, a matter both enriched and complicated by the central role of feelings.

A related clarification may be useful at this point. The concrete intelligibilities we ordinarily grasp are *proportionate*, intelligibilities that are constituted or conditioned (whether intrinsically or just extrinsically) by the empirical residue; but the reality and value we attribute to them are *transcendental* reality and value. That is to say, "reality" and "value," unlike "(proportionate) intelligibility," are transcendental, transcategorical notions, not categorical, predicamental ones. It follows that diverse concrete realities differ by virtue not of their *reality* but of their respective *intelligibilities*. Similarly, diverse concrete values differ by virtue not of their *value* but of their respective *intelligibilities*. Thus, for example, "vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values" differ not by virtue of their *value* but by virtue of the "scale of preference" according to which feelings respond to diverse groups of *intelligibilities* (or of *realities*: see previous paragraph). On the interpretation I will propose shortly, the feelings are the fulfilling element of the sufficient evidence on the basis of which value judgments attribute value to those diverse groups. (See *Method in Theology*, 31-32; compare with 39, 50, 52, 240.)

<sup>27</sup>Recall above, note 16.



individuals. For example, the normative (as distinct from meta-ethical)<sup>28</sup> "laws" of ethics are abstract generalizations of certain previous value judgments about concrete individual human acts. But in every instance the link emerges within an underlying pattern that is both far more general than any particular link and far more concrete than any abstract generalization. That pattern is part of the normative immanent and operative structure of my inherent cognitional morality; it is a concrete dynamic "if . . . , then . . ." procedure that is a naturally-given functional facet of the moral knower I am. It establishes the basic feature of all particular fourth-level links and their generalizations.

What then is that basic feature? Since the answer to that question is perhaps the core contention of this paper, it will be worthwhile to unfold it carefully. Consequently, in the three following subsections I propose further details about my moral knowing's immanent and operative structure. That is to say, I present aspects of my moral knowing insofar as it is invariant, pure, anticipated, not yet instantiated, determinate, realized. (For a visual aid to what follows, see Figure 1.)

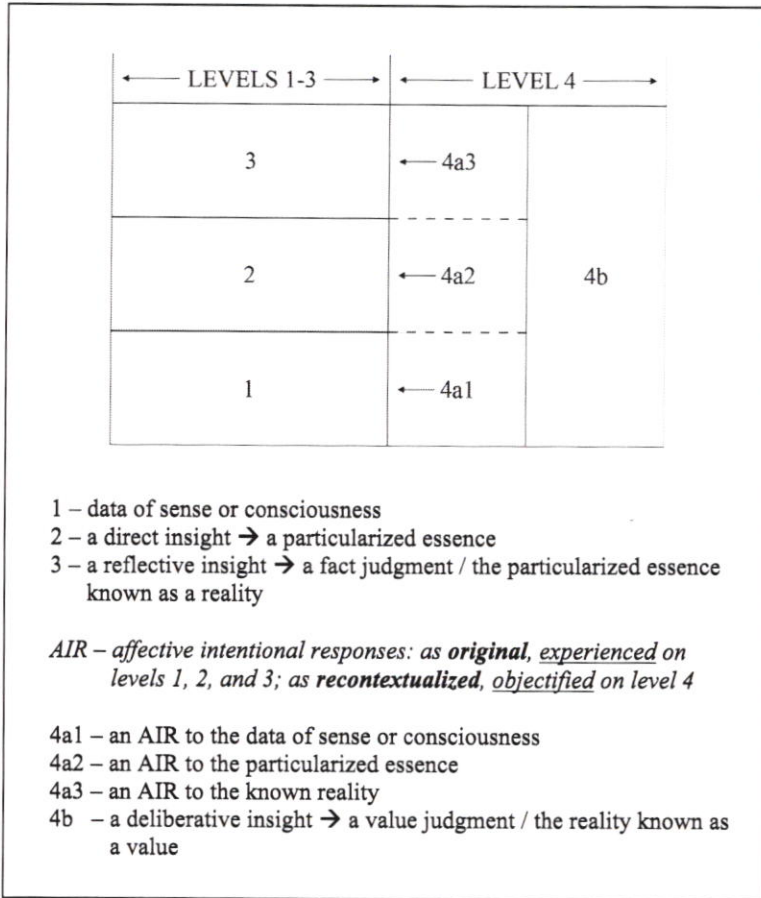
2.3.1.1. As we have seen, the inherent normative structure of my **rational** knowing comprises three successive levels of acts and contents. In the fundamental (i.e., extrospective) mode of that knowing, the intentional contents with which the respective levels conclude are sensed contents, data of sense; a conceived content, a particularized essence;<sup>29</sup> and an affirmed content, a reality. Moreover, the data of sense on the first level become a component of the particularized essence on the second level, and the latter in turn becomes a component of the reality on the third level.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>"Normative" and "meta-ethical," like "substantive" and "procedural," are labels often used by ethicists to designate a distinction that a Lonerganian might ordinarily indicate more broadly (i.e., not just in ethics but in every methodical investigation of the concrete) with such labels as "historical" and "heuristic," "determinate" and "structural," and so forth.

<sup>29</sup>In the present context I wish to highlight that a second-level content *exactly* as a potential content of factual affirmation is a conceptual synthesis of an intelligible form and *individual* (not merely common) matter. It is not an abstract essence but a concrete or *particularized* essence. (On this distinction, including Lonergan's occasional employment of the word "particularized," see *Understanding and Being*, 164-67, including editorial note *e*. Compare with *Collection*, 151-52; *Verbum*, 200-201.) I maintain in turn that the particularized essence is the intentional content that evokes an affective intentional response on the second level.

<sup>30</sup>What I say here regarding the structure of my rational (and later my moral) knowing in its extrospective mode also applies analogously to my knowing in its introspective mode. Since making that extension is not unduly challenging, I will not take pains to spell it out in this paper.

FIGURE 1. MY COGNITIONAL PROCESS ON LEVELS 1-4

An *affective intentional response* is a feeling about an intentional content that is evoked by that content. A *positive* response is a positive feeling; a *negative* response, a negative feeling. The inherent normative structure of my **moral** knowing includes such intentional responses to the three aforementioned intentional contents, responses I will designate as *original*. On the first level a feeling is evoked by and responds to the data of sense. On the second level a feeling is evoked by and responds to the particularized essence. And on the third level a feeling is evoked by and responds to the reality.

The three successive *original* affective intentional responses are lived events whose occurrence is virtually simultaneous with the emergence of the intentional contents to which they respond. However, they are not intrinsic to the process of intelligent cognition that is launched by a question for inquiry, nor to the process of rational cognition that is launched by a question for reflection.

2.3.1.2. The situation changes when a question for deliberation is asked, launching the process of moral cognition. With the posing of that question, the original affective intentional responses to data of sense, to the particularized essence, and to the reality are *recontextualized* on the fourth level. Let us recount this matter in more detail.

Recall that the inherent normative structure of my **rational** knowing anticipates data of sense that emerge cognitively through sensing that is *attentive*, sensing that corresponds exactly to the data of sense. It anticipates a particularized essence that emerges through understanding that is *intelligent*, understanding that (a) presupposes attentive sensing, (b) grasps through direct insight a concrete intelligible unity or relation in the data such sensing manifests, and (c) formulates that unity or relation as an essence. It anticipates a reality that emerges cognitively through fact judging that is *reasonable*, judging that (a) presupposes attentive sensing and intelligent understanding, (b) grasps through reflective insight the rational sufficiency of what such sensing and understanding manifest and (c) on that basis affirms the particularized essence as real.

The inherent normative structure of my **moral** knowing includes analogous anticipations. Broadly, it anticipates a valuable reality that emerges cognitively through value judging that is *responsible*. In more detail, it anticipates value judging that emerges from four levels of affective responses. On the first level, the affective response (a) is to data of sense that have emerged through *attentive* sensing and (b) is *responsibly* proportioned exactly to those data. On the second level, the affective response (a) presupposes the first-level response, (b) is to a particularized essence that has emerged through *intelligent* understanding, and (c) is *responsibly* proportioned exactly to that essence. On the third level, the affective response (a) presupposes the second-level response, (b) is to a reality that has emerged cognitively through *reasonable* fact judging, and (c) is *responsibly* proportioned exactly to that reality. On the fourth level, the affective response (a) consists of all three levels of *lived* responses as *objectified*, (b) is *responsibly* deemed the fulfilling



component of the evidence grasped as morally sufficient by deliberative insight, and thus (c) contributes crucially to the basis on which the reality is affirmed as valuable.

The normative structure of **rational** knowing reckons the cognitional sequence that begins with attentive sensing, proceeds through intelligent understanding, and culminates with reasonable fact-judging as *self-transcending* in the sense that it is faithful at root both to data of sense, on the one hand, and the transcendental intention of (intelligibility and) reality, on the other. As such, it is cognitively successful, epistemically objective, manifestive of *reality*. Similarly, the normative structure of **moral** knowing reckons the cognitional sequence that begins with attentive sensing, proceeds through intelligent understanding and reasonable fact-judging, and culminates with responsible value-judging as *self-transcending* in the sense that it is faithful at root both to data of sense, on the one hand, and the transcendental intention of (intelligibility and reality and) value, on the other. As such, it is cognitively successful, epistemically objective, manifestive of *real value*.

2.3.1.3. The preceding clarifications illuminate my proposal that the basic feature of all particular fourth-level links and their generalizations is nothing other than an objectification of something of myself exactly as a moral knower. At its most fundamental, the cognitional condition specified by any fourth-level link, the condition whose fulfillment would manifest a conditioned judgment of value as virtually unconditioned, is an objectification of the normative immanent and operative structure of myself insofar as my moral knowing is cognitively successful, epistemically objective, manifestive of *real value*. In the two preceding subsections I have contended that such cognitional success in turn is a matter of my *self-transcendence* as a moral knower, where the functional meaning of such self-transcendence is cognitional fidelity at root both to data of sense and the transcendental intention of (intelligibility and reality and) value. And I have sketched such cognitional fidelity in moderate detail, presenting it as a matter of proceeding *responsibly* on all four levels of my cognitional process.

Perhaps the foregoing can be expressed summarily by saying that the normative "if ..., then ..." pattern on the fourth level mandates that any conditionally true judgment of value ("this reality is a value") is unconditionally true if the *imagined* data of a positive responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response to the reality the judgment

would assert as a value are data I *experience*. And perhaps an apt articulation of the fundamental fourth-level link as such might be something like the following, where the phrase in italics is a symbolic image, a linguistic token,<sup>31</sup> of what I sketched in the two preceding subsections: "If I experience myself making a *positive responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response* to a reality, then that reality is a value."

At this point I move from the third subsection back to my broader consideration of the two elements of evidence sufficient for a moral answer to each question for deliberation. If the cognitional condition specified by a link is the first element of such evidence, the second element emerges when I review the data I actually experience. All such data, both data of sense and data of consciousness, may be pertinent to my *rational* knowing. However, the data immediately pertinent to my *moral* knowing are the subset that comprises my affective intentional responses to intentional contents I grasp. In the three previous subsections I sketched my affective intentional responses insofar as they are anticipated by the immanent and operative structure of my moral knowing. By contrast, my focus in this concluding step of my lived deliberating is the affective intentional responses I experience myself making. More precisely, my focus is my *original* responses on the first three levels, responses that subsequently are *recontextualized* on the fourth level: my response to data of sense; my response that, presupposing the preceding, is to a particularized essence; and my response that, presupposing the preceding, is to a reality. From the perspective of the fourth level, the set of original three-level responses more or less completely and definitively does or does not fulfill the specified cognitional condition of each conditioned judgment that would affirm a reality's value.

To recapitulate, then, in the first stage of my lived fourth-level cognitional process I review and recontextualize three elements within a naturally-given normative pattern of such elements, where the new context emerges as soon as I complement my earlier questions ("What is this?" and "Is this real?") with a new one ("Is this reality a value?"). As recontextualized on the fourth level, the three elements stand in a verificational process that in its first stage parallels the first stage of the third-level verificational process. That process begins with one or more conditioned judgments of value (the recontextualized realities). It proceeds to one or more (rational and) moral

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<sup>31</sup>As with the image of any data of consciousness, the image of my requisite intentional response is symbolic, not strictly representative. (Recall above, note 6.)



links between each conditioned judgment and its cognitional condition of being unconditionally true (the recontextualized rational links). And it concludes with the more or less complete and definitive experienced fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the conditions specified hypothetically by the respective links (the recontextualized set of original three-level affective intentional responses as actually experienced). To extend Lonergan's occasional terminology, the second and third of these steps are "marshalling" the evidence for the unconditional truth of the value judgment.<sup>32</sup>

2.3.2. *The Second Stage.* The second stage of my fourth-level process consists of one or more moral "aha" events: I have one or more deliberative insights. Whereas a direct insight grasps the *intelligible unity or relation* of data I experience, and a reflective insight grasps the *rational sufficiency* of evidential elements I marshal, a deliberative insight grasps the (rational and) *moral sufficiency* of evidential elements I marshal. Pondering the moral link that specifies the cognitional condition whose fulfillment would establish the conditioned judgment of value as unconditioned, plus my experience of how that condition is or is not fulfilled, I grasp the extent to which the condition is fulfilled – identically the extent to which the unconditionality of the value judgment is implicitly established. On my extension of Lonergan's occasional terminology, having a deliberative insight is "weighing" the evidence for the unconditional truth of the value judgment.<sup>33</sup> Such weighing can have any of five main outcomes.

First, the cognitional condition is grasped as *definitively fulfilled* insofar as all the pertinent questions about the truth of the conditioned judgment of value have been answered positively. That is to say, there remains no pertinent challenge to the respective attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness of the sensing, understanding, and fact judging that culminate in the cognitional emergence of the reality whose value I am now wondering about. Nor does there remain any pertinent challenge to the responsibility of the original first-level, second-level, and third-level affective intentional responses I experience myself making, responses that as recontextualized on the fourth level constitute the fulfilling component of the evidence that deliberative insight would grasp as morally sufficient.<sup>34</sup> In

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<sup>32</sup>See above, note 18.

<sup>33</sup>See above, note 18.

<sup>34</sup>Distinctively moral (by contrast with rational) challenges to the responsibility of the fulfilling evidential component on the fourth level stem from distortions within the set



this case, the value judgment is displayed as *certainly* unconditionally true.<sup>35</sup>

Second, the cognitional condition is grasped as *most likely fulfilled* insofar as some pertinent questions about the truth of the conditioned judgment of value have been answered positively and positive answers to all the remaining pertinent questions seem more likely than not. Any pertinent challenge to the attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness of the rational process that culminates in the cognitional emergence of the reality whose

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of original affective intentional responses that, as recontextualized on the fourth level, constitute that evidential component. For the radical affective tension I experience within myself is between the self-concern of my sensitivity and the totality-concern of my threefold transcendental intending. An imbalance in the first direction will make me unduly self-attached, while an imbalance in the second direction will leave me exaggeratedly focussed on totality. Any tendency on my part toward either imbalance will be reflected in an imbalance between my original first-level affective intentional responses, on the one hand, and my original second-level and third-level responses, on the other. My lived preferences will be skewed toward the intentional contents of sensing or toward those of understanding and fact-judging, with consequent correlative distortions emerging in my value-judging. (See, for example, *Insight*, 292-93, 410-11, 653-55, 749; compare with *Method in Theology*, 65-66.)

<sup>35</sup>In note 21 above, I contended that the certainty of some fact judgments is just *practical* at best, while of others it is *incontrovertible*. I now contend that the certainty of a *value* judgment is never more than *just practical*. That conclusion rests on a major premise and two successive minor premises. First, as I elaborated earlier in the text, the cognitional condition of responsibly affirming a conditioned judgment of value as unconditioned is always my experience of making a positive responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response to the reality about whose value I am wondering. But is that condition ever fulfilled? To put the issue precisely, do I ever experience my response as responsibly self-transcending?

In this or that instance, every apparently pertinent challenge to the responsible self-transcendence of my intentional affective response might be ruled out as *unreasonable*. For it might happen that I deliberately grasp every available aspect of the data constituting my response as consistent with the responsible self-transcendence of that response. In such a case, every denial of self-transcendence lacks evidence and thus is unreasonable; correspondingly, the certainty with which the conditioned judgment of value is displayed and affirmed as unconditionally true is *practical*.

On the other hand, there is no instance in which every apparently pertinent challenge to the responsible self-transcendence of my response can be ruled out as *unthinkable*. For I can never totally exclude the possibility that some aspects of the data constituting my response are both highly pertinent and unavailable to my deliberative grasp, hidden from my waking awareness by dramatic bias. Since dramatic bias not only conceals what I would grasp but also deforms my very capability of grasping, I can never entirely reject the possibility that what I grasp as the harmonious self-transcending integration of my affective intentional responses on all levels is in fact distorted to a lesser or greater degree in the direction of the lower level or the higher. Not for nothing do the saints caution us against overconfidence about our own salvation! Correspondingly, the certainty with which a conditioned judgment of value can be displayed and affirmed as unconditionally true – or, for that matter, as unconditionally false – is never *incontrovertible*, at best *just practical*. (For a compact sketch of dramatic bias and its cognitional consequences, see *Insight*, 214-27; compare with 242-44, 573-75. For an extremely rich and nuanced expansion, see Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990], especially chaps. 2, 7, and 8.)

value I am wondering about or to the responsibility of the moral process that culminates in the fourth-level evidential component seems solidly susceptible of being met. In this case, the judgment of value is displayed as *probably* unconditionally true.

Third, the cognitional condition is grasped as *most likely unfulfilled* insofar as a negative answer to at least one pertinent question about the truth of the conditioned judgment of value seems more plausible than not. At least one pertinent challenge to the rational process that culminates in the cognitional emergence of the reality in question or to the moral process that culminates in the fourth-level evidential component seems quite likely to be successful. In this case, the judgment of value is displayed as *probably* unconditionally false; or, equivalently, its contradictory is displayed as *probably* unconditionally true.

Fourth, the cognitional condition is grasped as *definitively unfulfilled* insofar as at least one pertinent question about the truth of the conditioned judgment of value has been answered negatively. At least one pertinent challenge to the underlying rational process or the moral process is clearly successful. In this case, the judgment of value is displayed as *certainly* unconditionally false; or, equivalently, its contradictory is displayed as *certainly* unconditionally true.

Fifth, whether the cognitional condition is fulfilled or unfulfilled is grasped as *obscure* insofar as the answers emergent thus far to the pertinent questions about the truth of the conditioned judgment of value do not stand in any of the four preceding categories. It remains unclear whether or not all the pertinent challenges to the underlying rational process or the moral process have been met or at least are solidly susceptible of being met. In this case, the judgment of value is displayed as *indeterminate*, as presently unable to be affirmed or denied.

2.3.3. *The Third Stage.* Finally, in the third stage of my fourth-level process, I follow through. Compelled (rationally and) morally by my one or more deliberative insights, I assert each corresponding judgment of value: "This reality certainly is a value," "This reality probably is a value," "This reality probably is not a value," "This reality certainly is not a value," and/or "Whether or not this reality is a value remains to be determined." And in and through each assertion, I answer the "whether" question that initiated my deliberation. I know the reality certainly or probably as a value, or probably or certainly as not a value, or as requiring further investigation in this respect.



2.3.4. *The Form of Deliberative Insight.* In discussing the first stage of fourth-level cognitional process, I noted that the three elements generated in that stage emerge within a naturally-given pattern of such elements. But that pattern also extends to the second and third stages, thus underlying and governing every complete instance of fourth-level process. The following syllogism illustrates that integral underlying and governing pattern. It expresses the immanent and operative structure of my responsible knowing. It formulates explanatorily the concrete conscious, intelligent, rational, and moral intelligible that is my "form of deliberative insight."<sup>36</sup>

If C, then D.

C.

Therefore D.

In this syllogism, the first line represents three factors of my fourth-level process as recontextualized and related within the horizon of the third transcendental intention. More exactly, *D* on the first line represents the value judgment ("this reality is a value") as conditionally, potentially, hypothetically true. *If C, then D* represents the moral link of that judgment to the cognitional condition of its being unconditionally, actually, absolutely true, namely, the experience of my positive responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response to the reality the judgment would assert as a value. *C* on the first line represents that condition as specified by the link: my positive responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response as *imagined*.<sup>37</sup> *C* on the second line represents the fulfillment of the specified condition: my affective intentional response as *experienced*. The first two lines taken together represent the evidence as marshalled. *Therefore* represents the content of my deliberative insight: the sufficiency of the evidence as weighed – identically the as-yet-unexpressed unconditional, actual, absolute truth of the value judgment that the evidential sufficiency establishes. Finally, *D*

<sup>36</sup>This paragraph analogically extends the early Lonergan's portrayal of the "form of reflective insight." Here I interpret the syllogism as a means of communicating not only *direct* and *reflective* insights but also *deliberative* insights. In another line, if one wishes to express the concrete "form of deliberative insight" in metaphysical terms, it would seem that it is my central form (my formal entitative potency, my soul) insofar as it is differentiated by sensitive, intellectual, and volitional conjugate forms (formal operative potencies). For more on these matters, see above, section 2.2.4, and note 22.)

<sup>37</sup>I reiterate that the image of the requisite intentional response, like the image of any data of consciousness, is symbolic rather than strictly representative. (See above, note 6.)



on the third line represents the unconditionally, actually, absolutely true judgment of value as asserted.

2.3.5. *An Example.* For an illustration of the fourth-level cognitional process, let us return to our previous example at the point where Deanna has just asserted the judgment of fact, "Harry, my jilted boyfriend, caused this mess to take revenge on me," an assertion in and through which she knows why her workshop is in disorder. Her reaction to this discovery is a spirited denunciation of Harry and what he has done. In the circumstances, she is able to reach this negative judgment of value through a process she completes virtually instantaneously. As delineated by our own meta-methodical objectification of them, what are the lived steps she goes through?

The first step of Deanna's fourth-level performance is to wonder about the value of the reality she has just discovered: "Insofar as it is the result of Harry's vengeful choice, is this mess a value?" This "whether" question of value situates the mess within the horizon of her third transcendental intention by envisioning it as the subject of a potentially true judgment of value ("Insofar as it results from Harry's vengeful choice, this mess is a value").

Next, Deanna deliberately objectifies the potentially true judgment's link to its cognitional condition of being actually true. Specific determinations of the link may include pertinent ethical guidelines that generalize previous value judgments about concrete individual human acts, generalizations made by the cultural community in which she grew up and and/or by Deanna herself. Examples of such determinate generalizations are "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"<sup>38</sup> and "Hatred of the neighbor is a sin when one deliberately wishes him evil."<sup>39</sup> But all such determinations emerge within and are fundamentally governed by the "if . . . , then . . ." pattern of her naturally-given cognitional morality, a pattern I have suggested may be expressed as "If I experience myself making a positive responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response to a reality, then that reality is a value."

With the cognitional condition mandated by the link in hand, Deanna now employs it as a criterion for assessing the mess exactly insofar as it resulted from Harry's choice; and she promptly recognizes that the mess, far from satisfying that criterion, directly contravenes it. That is to say,

<sup>38</sup>The "golden rule," common to many cultures.

<sup>39</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), #2303.

she grasps a pertinent challenge to the truth of the conditioned judgment of value as clearly successful. What is that successful challenge? It will be clarifying for us to address this question in two steps.

First, the successful challenge in this instance *is not* to the rational achievement reached on the previous levels and presupposed and recontextualized by the fourth level. More exactly, it *is not* to truth of the judgment of interpretative fact through which Deanna came to know that the mess is the result of Harry's vengeful choice. For her lived review confirms the absence of any remaining challenge to the adequacy of her *formulation* of that judgment. Moreover, it confirms the absence of any remaining challenge to the accuracy of the complex *direct insight* underlying that formulation, the insight grasping (a) that the mess resulted from Harry's successful implementation of a choice he made; (b) that in envisioning his choice he was sufficiently cognizant of its likely result and sufficiently free that it was morally attributable to him; (c) that the motive of his choice was to "pay back" Deanna for breaking up with him; (d) that he judged that this motive made his prospective choice a moral disvalue, a moral evil, morally condemnable, since it put the choice at odds not just with the moral guidelines he had learned from his community but more fundamentally with his own transcendental intention of value; and (e) that nonetheless he made and implemented that choice. Still further, Deanna's review also confirms the absence of any remaining challenge to the completeness of the *data* whose intelligibility the direct insight grasps.

Second, the successful challenge to the truth of the conditioned judgment of value in this instance *is* to the fulfilling element specified by the pertinent fourth-level link and thus indirectly to the judgment that entails that link. In more detail: What results from a choice expresses and embodies the moral meaning of that choice. Consequently, the conditioned judgment of value ("insofar as it results from Harry's vengeful choice, this mess is a value") entails a link specifying that Deanna experience herself making a positive responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response to the mess and the choice that produced it. As a matter of fact, however, the responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response Deanna experiences herself making to the mess and the underlying choice is not positive but strongly negative. Hence her deliberative insight grasps the requisite cognitional condition in this instance as *definitively unfulfilled*, the original judgment of value as certainly unconditionally false, and its contradictory as certainly



unconditionally true.

Deanna's lived fourth-level cognitional process in this instance concludes when, morally compelled by her deliberative insight, she asserts, "Insofar as it is the result of Harry's condemnable choice, this mess certainly is a moral disvalue, a moral evil, morally condemnable." And in and through that judgment, she knows the mess as condemnable.

### 3. DELIBERATIVE INSIGHTS

What I have written thus far in this paper positions me in this final main part to highlight eight claims I wish to make about the fourth-level cognitional acts I have been calling *deliberative insights*.

First, a deliberative insight is *similar* to a reflective insight in several respects. Both emerge in cognitional processes that are initiated by a question. Both cognitional processes are reflexive in the sense that what they regard includes my cognitional processes on prior levels. Both processes unfold in terms of preconceptual reasoning that aims to display a hypothetically true judgment as absolutely true by objectifying both its link to its cognitional condition of being absolutely true and the experienced fulfillment of that condition. Both a deliberative insight and a reflective insight are acts of understanding that culminate the respective reasoning processes by grasping the absolute truth of the judgments in question, grasps that prompt in turn my assertions of those judgments.

Second, a deliberative insight is *dissimilar* to a reflective insight in several respects. The cognitional process within which the reflective insight emerges is a third-level reflection initiated by a question about the reality of a formulated essence produced on the second level. But the cognitional process within which the deliberative insight emerges is a fourth-level deliberation initiated by a question about the value of a reality known in and through a fact judgment produced on the third level. Again, the reflective insight grasps the absolute truth of a judgment of fact and prompts my assertion of it, an assertion in and through which I know the reality of the formulated essence that I asked about. But the deliberative insight grasps the absolute truth of a judgment of value and prompts my assertion of it, an assertion in and through which I know the value of the reality that I asked about.

Third, however, perhaps the most instructive dissimilarity between



a deliberative insight and a reflective insight is in the character of the respective links and cognitional conditions that are part of the evidence those insights grasp as sufficient for the absolute truth of the judgments in question. On the third level, the condition to which the (intelligent and) rational link connects the hypothetically true judgment of fact is the group of imagined data that are included in the formulated essence whose reality I am wondering about; and the fulfillment of that condition is my concrete experience of those data. Moreover, although in any given instance the link may embody something particular or generalized that I have learned, in every instance its core is something far more basic: a dynamic "if . . . , then . . ." structure that is an inherent feature of my concrete *rationality*. On the fourth level, by contrast, the condition to which the (rational and) moral link connects the hypothetically true judgment of value is a group not simply of imagined data of sense or consciousness but, more narrowly, a (symbolic, perhaps linguistic) image of the data of consciousness that would constitute my positive responsibly self-transcending affective intentional response to the reality whose value I am wondering about; and the fulfillment of that condition is my concrete experience of making such a response. Moreover, although in any given case the link may incorporate something particular or generalized that I have learned, in every case its core is something far more basic: a dynamic "if . . . , then . . ." structure that is an innate feature of my concrete *cognitional morality*.

Fourth, this account clarifies certain ambiguities regarding the character and function of the later Lonergan's "apprehensions of value . . . given in feelings . . . [feelings that are] intentional responses to values."<sup>40</sup> It safeguards the utter centrality of the affective intentional response in my fourth-level cognitional process; but it identifies it as the concretely experienced fulfillment of a cognitional condition specified in any given instance by the pertinent fourth-level link. The account thus eliminates every hint of the suggestion that "intentional responses to values" are or include intuitions of real values, and that asserted value judgments simply rubber stamp what I already know. Instead, firmly maintaining that my knowing on every level beyond the first is discursive, the account presents my affective intentional response as *just one element* of the discursive process characteristic of my fourth-level knowing. It envisages my affective intentional response as part

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<sup>40</sup>*Method in Theology*, 37-38.

of the sufficient evidence that an "apprehension of value" understands *as* sufficient, an understanding that manifests the judgment of value as absolutely true. That understanding in turn (rationally and) morally impels my assertion of the judgment of value; and in and through that asserted judgment I attribute absolute value to this/that reality, I affirm this/that reality as an incremental satisfaction of my transcendental intention of value, I know this/that reality as a value. An account along these lines would seem to be required in any case for fidelity to the characteristic Aristotelian and Thomist philosophical claim that human knowing in the full and proper sense is discursive rather than intuitive, a claim Lonergan typically embraces.

Fifth, it is worth noting that from the standpoint of *metaphysics* it is not necessarily misleading at all to speak of either "intentional responses to values" or – to pick one possible parallel – "sensations of sensible realities." For metaphysics approaches everything in terms of its being, its reality, including acts of sensation, their sensible contents, acts of intentional response, and their valuable contents. Such an approach in no way intimates the intuitionist claims that sensible contents are known *as real* solely through sensation or that valuable contents are known *as really valuable* solely through intentional response. On the other hand, *phenomenology*, the first of the three steps of intentionality analysis,<sup>41</sup> begins before the standpoint of metaphysics has been achieved; and it considers successive contents simply terms of the successive conscious intentional acts by which they emerge in consciousness. On this approach, to speak of "sensations of sensible realities" before one's analysis of fact judgments has justified such language clearly implies an intuitionist stance. Similarly, to speak of "intentional responses to values [i.e., real valuables]" before one's analysis of value judgments has justified such language once again implies an intuitionist stance. In my view, one reason for the ambiguities in Lonergan's portrayal of affective intentional responses is the premature intrusion of metaphysical language into an account that appears in the first place to be phenomenological.

Why did Lonergan not take pains to investigate and spell out more fully the discursive details of fourth-level cognitional process in his most extended though still relatively brief treatments of the matter in *Method*

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<sup>41</sup>Recall above, note 6.



in *Theology*, especially pages 30-41? Why did he not at least distinguish more clearly between metaphysical and phenomenological standpoints and language in those treatments? Perhaps the answer to such questions lies in his personal situation. The state of Lonergan's health was quite uncertain during the period when he was working on the manuscript of his prospective book. Consequently he had grave concerns about whether he would be able to complete it. Moreover, he felt especially pressured to spell out what he envisioned as the manuscript's central and most original feature, his recently-discovered scheme of eight interrelated functional specializations for theology – and, indeed, for the entire set of investigative disciplines.<sup>42</sup> It would hardly be surprising if he recognized rather clearly the limitations of his fourth-level account but contented himself with saying enough to provide the necessary basis for discussing eightfold functional specialization, leaving details of the fourth level (along with several other unfinished matters) to be worked out subsequently by other methodologists.

Sixth, in light of the five preceding points it is easy to explain why I think "deliberative insight" is superior to Lonergan's "apprehension of value" as a label for the pivotal step of fourth-level cognitional process. The word "insight" clearly suggests an act of *understanding*, whereas the word "apprehension" can all too easily suggest an act of *sheerly receptive awareness, perception, intuition*. The word "deliberative" unambiguously situates that act of understanding as culminating the fourth-level process of preconceptual reasoning that Lonergan labels "deliberation"; and it helpfully implies a certain functional parallel with the act of "reflective" understanding culminating the third-level process of preconceptual reasoning that Lonergan labels "reflection." In sum, the first three of the following four labels are already well-established in the Lonerganian lexicon: "reflection," "reflective insight," "deliberation," and "deliberative insight." It strikes me that the four labels collectively possess both semantic clarity and stylistic consistency, and thus that it would be beneficial to adopt the fourth for regular usage as well. At the same time, however, I stress that this terminological point is a relatively peripheral one, far less significant than the substantive claims I have been laboring to establish.

Seventh, just as maintaining the primacy of direct and reflective insight

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<sup>42</sup>Biographical accounts of this period are not lacking. A good starting point is Frederick Crowe, *Lonergan* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier Books, 1992), 95-123, especially 106-108.



in what we might label *Fact Studies* displaces such stances as conceptualism and rational intuitionism in those enterprises, so also maintaining the primacy of direct, reflective, and deliberative insight in what we might label *Value Studies* displaces such stances as conceptualism, rational intuitionism, and valuational intuitionism in those undertakings. The point merits illustration.

For classical physicists such as Newton, Einstein, and Steven Weinberg, the basic norms of mechanics are universal intelligible realities that at least in principle are grasped by means of intellectual and rational intuition. One feature of this tradition is that the random events an investigator encounters are viewed as manifestations not of reality but of some deficiency in the investigator's method. For Lonergan, by contrast, mechanics (like every other investigative venture) begins by experiencing, understanding, and judging concrete individuals, in this case material things and events. The "laws" of mechanics are abstract generalizations of one's judgments about such individual things and events; such generalizations include not only *systematic* accounts of properties that characterize things but also *statistical* accounts of the occurrences of those properties in things; both the systematic and the statistical laws are expressive of reality exactly insofar as they are verified; and at best the verifications of both types of laws are neither less nor more than highly probable.<sup>43</sup>

Analogously, for deontological ethicists such as W.D. Ross, Germain Grisez, and Robert Audi, the basic norms of ethics are universal intelligible and real moral values that at least in principle are grasped by means of ethical intuition.<sup>44</sup> One hallmark of this tradition is that various kinds of human acts are deemed *intrinsically evil*, quite apart from any consideration of concrete particular instances. For Lonergan, by contrast, ethics (like every other investigative venture) begins with knowledge of concrete individuals, in this case human subjects and their freely chosen acts. The substantive (as

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<sup>43</sup>See, for example, chapters 2 through 5 of *Insight*.

<sup>44</sup>I am inclined to think that so-called *proportionalist* ethicists such as Josef Fuchs, Richard McCormick, and Charles Curran also are afflicted with conceptualism and intuitionism insofar as they, like their deontologically-oriented colleagues, begin their analyses with the general distinction between a human act and its consequences already firmly in place. By contrast, for an ethicist who begins her analysis with insight into a particular situation, what is fundamental is the concrete intelligibility of that situation. The distinction between an act and its consequences is an abstract generalization of certain aspects of what insight first grasps concretely, and such a generalization pertains to *other* concrete situations only insofar as its pertinence is verified.

distinct from the procedural)<sup>45</sup> "laws" of ethics are abstract generalizations of one's value judgments about such individual subjects and acts; such generalizations are real moral values exactly insofar as they are verified; at best the verifications of substantive ethical laws are neither less nor more than highly probable; and "intrinsically evil" as a *substantive* ethical category is set aside as an intuitionist mistake. On the other hand, "intrinsically evil" as a category of *procedural* ethics – or more broadly as a *methodical* category, whether in ethics or mechanics or any other investigative undertaking – retains its full force. It includes any act that violates the natural law, where "the natural law is 'be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible,' and any precept you arrive at from observing those precepts."<sup>46</sup>

Eighth and finally, just as the fourth level of human knowing in general presupposes and sublates the second and third, so deliberative insights in particular presuppose and sublate direct insights and reflective insights. Let me label deliberative insights *discrete* insofar as they are distinct from direct and reflective insights but *subsumptive* insofar as they sublate them. It then seems that deliberative insights as subsumptive are my supreme acts of cognitional self-constitution, the richest of all the cognitional acts that shape me as a knower.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

My central contention in this paper regards the substance, not the label, of the pivotal cognitional act on the fourth level of my conscious-intentional process. That pivotal act, I maintain, is a reflexive grasp of the evidence sufficient to ground a judgment of value and in turn a decision. The *most obvious* element of the sufficient evidence is my affective intentional response to the reality whose value I wonder about. But that response is not the *sole* element of the evidence. Rather, it is the fulfillment of a cognitional condition to which the conditioned judgment of value is (intelligibly and rationally and) morally linked, a condition whose details vary from instance

<sup>45</sup>See above, note 28.

<sup>46</sup>Bernard Lonergan, as cited by Frederick Crowe, *Lonergan Studies Newsletter*, 15 (1994), 37-38. See also *A Second Collection*, 169-70; *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980*, 75, 378; *Method in Theology*, 231, 302.

<sup>47</sup>I maintain that this contention is not displaced even when the experience of unrestricted loving is taken into account. Rather, such experience can constitute the fulfilling element of transcendently illuminating deliberative insights that ground transcendently illuminating value judgments. Such is how I interpret what Lonergan is getting at, for example, in *Method in Theology*, 115-17.

to instance but whose constant features are mandated by the dynamic operative structure that is an inherent feature of my cognitional morality.

In other words, I am claiming that responsibly knowing the value of some reality is similar in structure to rationally knowing the reality of some formulated essence. My knowing the reality's value is neither the cognitive aspect of a *construction* of its value nor an *immediate, intuitive discovery* of it. Rather, it is a *mediated, discursive discovery* of it, a process whose culmination is my evidence-based affirmation of a conditioned judgment of value, a complex "inner word of value," as (virtually) unconditioned.

It seems to me that the alternatives to this account are at odds with both the essentially Aristotelian-Thomist framework of Lonergan's thought and various explicit remarks that appear here and there in Lonergan's writings throughout his career. They also seem firmly at odds with my own grasp of myself as a value judge, though that can hardly settle the issue for others. And in any case, it remains that if these matters were utterly clear they would not be so controversial. I hope my effort here contributes in some way to advancing the discussion.



## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Eclipse and Recovery of Beauty: A Lonergan Approach*

John Dadosky, University of Toronto Press, 2014, xiv + 255 pages

A COLLEAGUE OF MINE, who did not study Lonergan regularly, once found himself pulling *Method in Theology* off the shelf to see what Lonergan had to say on a particular subject. But once he began reading he found that couldn't put the book down, and stayed up into the wee hours of the morning, coming close to finishing the book. "I think I get what he's doing," my colleague said to me the next day, "he's trying to recover the medieval transcendentals: the One, the True, the Good, and the Beautiful." I had never thought of *Method in Theology* in this way, but it makes a certain amount of sense. For all of its focus on subjectivity and knowing, every moment in Lonergan's intentionality analysis has its ontological corollary, and the whole of his philosophy is dedicated to orienting human wonder to the being that is ground of all beings, which comprehends all of the transcendentals and reveals their identity with one another, and which serves as a unique analogy for the divine. But in any Lonerganian "recovery" there are, of course, many alterations made, so that the word, "transcendental," in Lonergan, never precisely correlates to medieval usage of that term, nor to that of many later "transcendental" thinkers.

John Dadosky's book, *The Eclipse and Recovery of Beauty*, focuses on the idea of beauty as it existed in medieval thought in the form of a transcendental, as it became subjectivized in the course of the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century romanticism, and as it might be recovered, in a rehabilitated ontological mode, through Lonergan's thinking. Dadosky is very much aware that such a recovery is by no means the simple re-grounding of a medieval transcendental upon a new epistemology. The dimension of interiority that Lonergan seeks to bring to the study of the world mediated by meaning is not a stepping stone to a pre-determined metaphysics but a life-long task of self-discovery, a task that is so difficult – so multivalent and polymorphic – that just as we must say that every contemporary discipline

studies being, so we must say that nearly every discipline has something to contribute to transcendental theorizing on beauty. Dadosky's awareness of this fact makes his work exploratory and suggestive rather than systematic and exhaustive, but the need to pursue the inquiry through multiple avenues is very appropriate for an approach attempting to follow Lonergan's own path through questions of art and beauty.

Three major questions face anyone who undertakes to interpret Lonergan's thought on such matters: (1) What is the place of aesthetics in his thought – including aesthetic experience, aesthetic judgment, and artistic creation? (2) How is Lonergan's thought related to the history of philosophical thinking on aesthetics? and (3) How might Lonergan's thought inform one's interpretation of works of art and one's appreciation of the wonders of nature? Regarding the first question, Dadosky explores the idea of beauty as a transcendental by pulling together a number of Lonergan's observations, and perhaps most tellingly, the idea that aesthetic experience involves a "surplus of meaning" that may be found in functional things but transcends their functionality; a surplus that involves both the sensible and the intelligible, yet grants a pleasure that exceeds mere experience and comprehension; a surplus that intimates value through the feelings elicited; a surplus that may be immediately experienced or may require training or habituation in order to fully appreciate. All of these features of beauty as experienced and known resonate, for Dadosky, with Boneventura's notion of beauty as a transcendental that manifests the "splendor of all the transcendentals" (36).

The modern history of thinking on aesthetics forms the "eclipse" of the book's title. Enlightenment scientism cast doubt on the objectivity of aesthetic judgments. Kant could recover the judgment of beauty only as a "subjective universal" and as having neither the objectivity about appearances that mathematical and natural-scientific judgments have nor the practical normativity that ethical judgments have. Romantic thinkers elevated aesthetic experience and judgment to a level of super-mundane sensitivity and genius, all the while reinforcing the subjectivized status of the aesthetic that Kant had established. The freedom from constraint that this status granted to artists fueled modernism's unrelenting determination to make every artistic convention a variable that is subject to artistic manipulation – yielding, in its worst excesses, an inability to communicate beyond the narrow confines of the professional art world. By contrast,



Lonergan joins with other twentieth-century thinkers, such as Heidegger and Gadamer, who make the case that aesthetic experience is not merely subjective but is ontologically disclosive. The mediation of the world by aesthetic meaning reveals sensuous qualities that vivify the real involvement of body and world; aesthetic insights illuminate the real intelligibility of the world; aesthetic value forms a real means by which heart speaks to heart and the whole of creation may truly be seen as returning one's love. To say that Lonergan aligns, in this way, with anti-metaphysical ontologists like Heidegger and Gadamer is very different from saying he recovers the transcendentals of Aquinas and Bonaventure, yet the association of all of these differing philosophical projects is apt because the tradition in question is a persistent one throughout Western thought, going back to Plato's thinking of a "being beyond being" – the intimation, as old as philosophy itself, that there is something to ponder beyond the mere categories of things, and that this something more – call it "being" – makes the search for what would be "first philosophy" a perennially ongoing one.

Because Dadosky sees his philosophical inquiry as preparation for a theology of beauty, he uses the work of theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar for his account of the historical subjectivization of the aesthetic. Though this use is entirely appropriate, Dadosky finds himself having to take issue with some of the idiosyncrasies of Balthasar's account. In particular, Balthasar reads Kierkegaard's category of "the aesthetic" as underscoring the Romantic divorce of the aesthetic dimension of life from the ethical and religious ones, but Dadosky corrects this impression by showing that Kierkegaard intends quite the opposite – that is, the taking-up of aesthetic values into the ethical and religious spheres. One wonders whether, if Dadosky had relied more heavily on Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in his account of the history of aesthetics (as he does on some other topics), he might have avoided the need for this sort of correction of his guiding sources.

Finally, Dadosky does have some indications, in the course of his study, of how Lonergan's thought might aid the interpretation of works of art. Most notably, perhaps, he examines the design elements promoted by architect and theorist, Christopher Alexander, in his book, *Nature of Order*, volume 1 of the *Phenomenon of Life*.<sup>1</sup> The use of these principles is relevant, in that Alexander himself professes to be trying to get at "real beauty" rather

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Alexander, *Nature of Order*, volume 1 of the *Phenomenon of Life* (Berkeley, CA: Center for Environmental Structure, 2002).



than merely subjective constructions, and his way of categorizing elements of beauty grows out of his very rich vision of architectural experience, which combines in marvelously intuitive ways, the aesthetic, the existential, and the commonsensical. Dadosky correlates fifteen principles that Alexander puts forward with Thomist principles of *consonantia*, *integritas*, and *claritas*. This project is certainly an interesting one, and is consistent with the aim of recovering something of the old transcendentalists, but it also invites the further question as to how Alexander's principles might connect more directly with Lonergan's own thinking, including his revisions of Aquinas. An analogous project was undertaken by Christian Norberg-Schulz in relation to Heidegger's ontology of art, and Norberg-Schulz has also become a standard source for Lonergan scholars working on architecture.

*The Eclipse and Recovery of Beauty* draws together many threads of Lonergan's thinking on art and beauty, doing so in a way that dips into a broad range of related thinkers. It does so sometimes methodically and sometimes incidentally, but always with worthwhile results, for the effort to align Lonergan with other voices that would turn back the massive tide of aesthetic subjectivization is a laudable one in any form, for no one thinker should have to undertake such a daunting reversal of historical and cultural trends alone.

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