

Reception and Elemental Meaning: An Expansion of the Notion of Psychic Conversion

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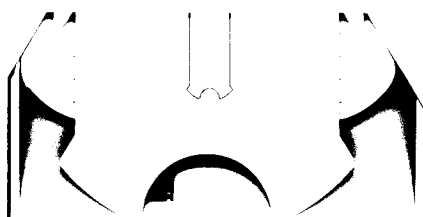
1 Background

I must emphasize that this paper is exploratory, representative of a work in progress. For many, no doubt, it will raise more questions than it answers. And some perhaps will find it too irenic. I seek peace, from a Lonergan standpoint, with Heidegger, with Wittgenstein, and with von Balthasar. I think this peace is desirable. I think it is necessary. I think it is possible. Some will disagree.

I speak in the title of expanding the notion of psychic conversion. The notion is in need of an expansion in two directions. There is needed an expansion into the organic, and there is needed an expansion into the hermeneutical. This paper does not attempt the first, except by suggestion in a quotation from Max Scheler that will appear later. What I am about here is an expansion of the notion of psychic conversion into the realm of the hermeneutical.

This paper has both a remote and a proximate occasion. The remote occasion is illustrated in a conversation that I had with Bernard Lonergan during the last year of his life. I had been reading the first volume of Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, *Seeing the Form*.¹ For people educated by Lonergan, the very title, of course, raises immediate suspicions of naive realism, especially if they do not realize that 'form' here translates *Gestalt*, and so is an aesthetic rather than a metaphysical concept. The same suspicions are occasioned by a number of passages in the book where 'beholding' and 'perceiving' the form of revelation in Christ are also called *Wahrnehmen*, which

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1: *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982).

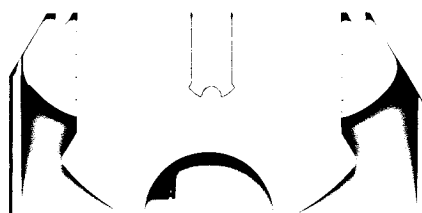


literally means 'to take to be true.'² I brought up these passages in my conversation with Lonergan. I was genuinely perplexed by them, for I thought that von Balthasar was basically correct in much of what he says, that he was naming an all-too-forgotten ingredient in Christian experience, that his emphases were for the most part salutary, and that he was not a naive realist. And yet I could not see how his language could avoid such a charge. At first Lonergan just looked at me with a look that communicated something like, 'What's your problem?' And then he said, 'You're a Catholic, aren't you?' at which point his look became that bright-eyed, smiling, but also disconcerting face that he often presented in moments like this and that communicated something like, 'Of course you must get the point of what I'm saying, but just to make sure, show me a sign that you get it!'

Each of those looks embodied a great deal of elemental meaning! But elemental meaning was also the clue to what I was asking about, because it is elemental meaning that von Balthasar is referring to when he speaks of 'taking to be true' (*Wahrnehmen*) an aesthetic form that is beheld, perceived. I suspect that something similar is the case when Hans-Georg Gadamer speaks of the truth of a work of art, but I yield to others more knowledgeable than I. These are not the expressions of a naive realist. They are not the formulations of a basic counterposition. In von Balthasar's case, they need careful monitoring from a more elaborate philosophical stance than is found in his work. But we students of Lonergan have to find a better way to account for them than we have shown so far, and our attempt to discover such an explanation may lead to an enrichment of our own position.

The proximate inspiration behind this paper is a document that was presented at a Lonergan Research Institute seminar in early April of this year by Sean J. McGrath, a recent Ph.D. graduate from the University of Toronto. McGrath's paper is entitled

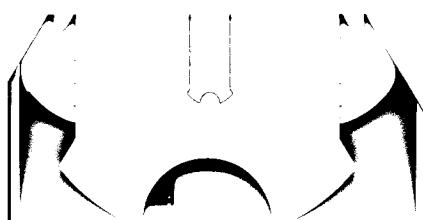
2 See, for instance, *ibid.* the second unnumbered page of the Foreword.



'Heidegger and Duns Scotus on Truth and Language.' McGrath's contribution to the seminar included not only this paper, which he had written for publication and which has subsequently been accepted in a slightly revised form by *The Review of Metaphysics*,³ but also an introductory statement written expressly for the Lonergan seminar, in which he relates the problems that the paper discusses to Lonergan's cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics, and raises questions for Lonergan students. The paper and its introductory statement, as well as the discussion at the seminar, brought me back to the original inspiration behind the notion of psychic conversion, which, it happens, occurred to me some thirty years ago as I was wrestling with questions raised by my own reading of Heidegger. As a result of McGrath's phrasing of the questions that would be raised in a Heidegger-Lonergan encounter, I can revisit that notion and expand it to dimensions that perhaps better meet the original question that provoked the insight. It is in this effort that we might find as well the way to account for what von Balthasar is on to in the aesthetic dimension of his work.

The heart of what I want to say is that the acknowledgment of a movement of reception 'from above,' that is, from tradition, from the community, enables us to broaden or expand our account of what Lonergan calls empirical consciousness, the experience not only of the data of sense but also of the data of consciousness, so that included among the data that occur to the attentive subject of a consciousness that is also invested with exigencies to be intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, and that is meant for love, are not only and not even primarily the spontaneous, immediate data of sense and consciousness, and not just those data along with the symbolic and dramatic-aesthetic operators, including feelings, that I was attempting to pinpoint in earlier formulations of the notion of psychic conversion, but also the meanings and values that are included in

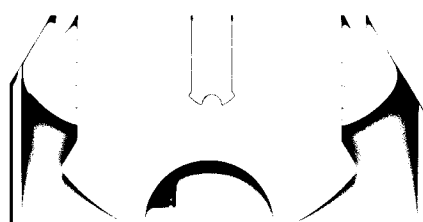
3 The paper will be published in the December 2003 issue of *The Review of Metaphysics* at pp. 323-43. The published version was not available when I completed this paper, and so my references are to the typed version.



von Balthasar's 'seeing the form' and in Heidegger's fore-theoretical, in a sense preconceptual, grasp of temporal, historical facticity, of what Heidegger, perhaps misleadingly, calls *Sein*, and, let me add, also in Wittgenstein's insistence on the public meaningfulness of ordinary language. This may mean in the long run that those of us who follow Lonergan might want to rename empirical consciousness in intentionality analysis, that rather than calling it 'experience' we might do better to call it something like 'reception.' But it may also mean that, as we read Lonergan with these questions in mind, we will find that he had a fuller notion of empirical consciousness than we commonly give him credit for. And finally, it may even mean that we need another metaphor than 'levels.'

The early Lonergan's notion of patterns of experience, where 'experience' refers to empirical consciousness, is already open to such an expansion, I think, and it provides one link or bridge in Lonergan's work to the theological concerns of von Balthasar and to the philosophical concerns of both Heidegger and Wittgenstein. This is particularly clear in what Lonergan writes regarding the relative primacy of the dialectic of community over the dialectic of the subject. It is the community that sets the stage for the subject's dramatic pattern of experience. 'In this relationship the dialectic of community holds the dominant position, for it gives rise to the situations that stimulate neural demands, and it molds the orientation of intelligence that preconsciously exercises the censorship' over what will be allowed into consciousness.⁴ That 'what will be allowed into consciousness' may include more than the elements in the sensitive stream that Lonergan enumerates: sensations, memories, images, emotions, conations. It may include meanings and values. Again, there is a 'prior collaboration of imagination and intelligence' in which 'the materials that emerge in consciousness are already patterned, and the pattern is already

⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 243.



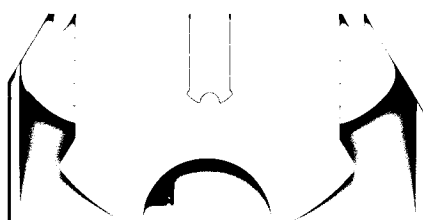
charged emotionally and conatively.’⁵ It may be asked, I think, whether this apprehensive reception of an ‘already patterned’ set of materials can be related to Heidegger’s *Verstehen*, and whether the emotionally and conatively charged character of the reception can be related to his *Befindlichkeit*, where *Verstehen* and *Befindlichkeit* are the two equiprimordial ways of being *Dasein*, the ‘there’ of *Sein*, where *Sein* has Heidegger’s peculiar twist, which, unless I am mistaken, is something like ‘the historically conditioned horizon of common meaning that affects the very reception of data.’⁶

Some might claim that these concessions in Lonergan’s work to a broader notion of empirical consciousness, if indeed they are concessions, are thin. But even if that is the case (and I don’t think it is), the notion of patterns of experience anticipates the richer and fuller notions of mediated immediacy and elemental meaning found in Lonergan’s later work, and I think it can be argued that the materials named in a theological way by von Balthasar and in different philosophical ways by Heidegger and Wittgenstein are already included in these notions. And I suspect that the movement from above complicates the structure in ways that we have yet to articulate.

Again, there is what in *Insight* Lonergan calls ‘the contextual aspect of judgment,’ which exhibits something of the temporality that is to the fore in *Being and Time* – not the radical temporalizing, which remains problematic, but at least the dimensions of memory, presence, and anticipation. The contextual aspect of judgment is discussed in terms of ‘the relation of the present to the past,’ ‘the relations within the present,’ and

5 Ibid. 212.

6 On *Verstehen* and *Befindlichkeit*, see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) 182. ‘State-of-mind is *one* of the existential structures in which the Being of the ‘there’ maintains itself. Equiprimordial with it in constituting this Being is *understanding*. A state-of-mind always has its understanding, even if it merely keeps it suppressed. Understanding always has its mood.’

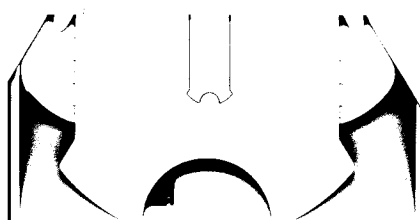


‘the relations of the present to the future.’ It is principally, though not exclusively, the relation of the present to the past that affects the point I am trying to make.

... past judgments remain with us. They form a habitual orientation, present and operative but only from behind the scenes. They govern the direction of attention, evaluate insights, guide formulations, and influence the acceptance or rejection of new judgments. Previous insights remain with us. They facilitate the occurrence of fresh insights, exert their influence on new formulations, provide presuppositions that underlie new judgments whether in the same or in connected or in merely analogous fields of inquiry. Hence, when a new judgment is made, there is within us a habitual context of insights and other judgments, and it stands ready to elucidate the judgment just made, to complement it, to balance it, to draw distinctions, to add qualifications, to provide defence, to offer evidence or proof, to attempt persuasion.⁷

I would like to adopt and adapt some of Heidegger’s language at this point, and affirm that the habitual orientation formed by previous judgments and the habitual context of insights and other judgments help to constitute the intelligent and dispositional components of *Dasein* that function in the very reception of data. And I want to emphasize that the judgments and insights that function in this way may be, not our own, but handed onto us, in the movement from above, by the community. At the same time, I would suggest that Heidegger can benefit from Lonergan’s contribution especially to the discussion of the relations within the present and of the relations of the present to the future. The relations of the present to the past have to do by and large with what has become what Lonergan calls ‘ordinary meaningfulness,’ or what Wittgenstein would call the public meaningfulness of language, while the relations within the present and the relations of the present to the future may release the processes that exhibit original

⁷ Lonergan, *Insight* 302.

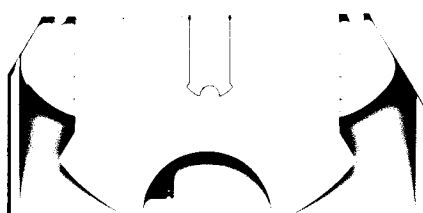


meaningfulness. Heidegger and Wittgenstein, in quite different ways, illuminate the realm of ordinary meaningfulness, and Lonergan the realm of original meaningfulness, and all three exhibit a great deal of original meaningfulness no matter what it is that they are illuminating. Moreover, it may be that original meaningfulness may be the set of elements needed to transcend the radical temporalizing by which Heidegger places Being 'within' time rather than time 'within' Being.

The relations within the present, then, may be such as to show either mutual dependence and other connections or even conflicts among existing judgments. The connections stimulate logical efforts for 'organized coherence,' while conflicts 'release the dialectical process.' Again, the relations of the present to the future call attention to the dynamic structure of knowledge, something on which, it may safely be argued, Heidegger, at times associating or correlating Being with the transcendental imagination, does not lay sufficient stress. In brief, Lonergan says, 'All we know is somehow with us; it is present and operative within our knowing; but it lurks behind the scenes, and it reveals itself only in the exactitude with which each minor increment to our knowing is effected.'⁸ But the same is true of all that we have received in the order of meaning and value. And I am asking whether all we know and all we have received reveals itself in the further reception of data, and whether those data include meanings and values. Is this not part of what is meant by the expression 'mediated immediacy'?

Again, I am still very much in an exploratory mode here. Moreover, it may be the case that what I am saying may not be at all new to many. Perhaps it is even already common currency in the Lonergan community, which is my primary community of philosophical and theological discourse; and if that is the case, then forgive me for catching up with it late in life – at least relatively late in life (late enough to have an artificial hip!). On the other hand, perhaps it will simply be rejected by the Lonergan

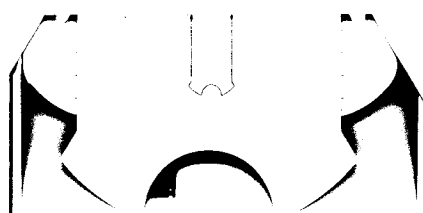
⁸ Ibid. 303.



community, and never become common currency here. Or, like the notion of psychic conversion (to which these reflections are not unrelated), perhaps it will find a home with some while being excluded by others. Still, if the general thrust of what I am saying is correct, it provides a bridge that may enable us to link two of the theological giants of the past century, von Balthasar and Lonergan, and to mediate what may in the long run prove to be the three most influential and lasting philosophical works of the past century:

Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, and Lonergan's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*.

I will spend some time, then, summarizing Sean McGrath's work, in order to situate my own suggestions. I begin with McGrath's longer paper, 'Heidegger and Duns Scotus on Truth and Language,' and especially with its opening section, where his thesis is summarized, and move subsequently to the introductory statement that he wrote expressly for the Lonergan Research Institute seminar, in which he proposes a set of questions that might encourage a dialogue between 'Heidegger' and 'Lonergan,' that is, between the people who understand and espouse their respective positions. I will proceed here on the assumption that McGrath is correct in his analysis of the Scotist roots of Heidegger's thought, a position that he arrived at while writing his doctoral dissertation, and in fact that in naming this connection he has made a major contribution to our understanding at least of the early Heidegger. I will not summarize in detail his analysis of Scotist texts or go into the intricate details of his comparison of Heidegger and Scotus, but will limit myself to the broad strokes that he employs when he summarizes his findings. Moreover, I am not claiming explicit Scotist roots for either von Balthasar or Wittgenstein. I have long wondered whether a straightforward Wittgensteinian position based on *Philosophical Investigations* was a version of Scotist conceptualism, but I have no idea whether Scotus had any direct influence on Wittgenstein. As for von Balthasar, his references to Scotus in the two volumes of the *Aesthetics* devoted to the history of metaphysics are severely negative, at least as much so as are Lonergan's judgments on



the 'subtle doctor.' For von Balthasar, it is with Scotus that the obviousness of 'the circle of accessibility achieved between God and man' that is celebrated in the high points of medieval culture is first lost sight of.⁹ In this sense, for von Balthasar modern atheism is rooted in the work of the now Blessed John Duns Scotus!

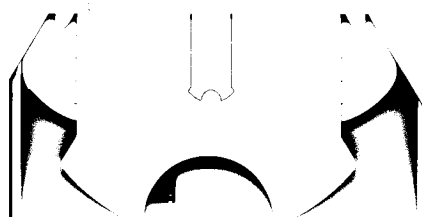
2 Sean J. McGrath: 'Heidegger and Duns Scotus on Truth and Language'¹⁰

McGrath begins his paper with the claim that Heidegger's notion of truth as *alêtheia*, unconcealment, is a version of Scotism, and indeed that further debts to Scotus appear when we realize that in *Being and Time* Heidegger is asking, not exactly about being, but about the *meaning* or *logos* or *essentia* of being, and in Heidegger's claim that 'higher than actuality stands possibility,' since being is identical to *essentia*, to *logos*, to meaning. Heidegger claims that we have a preunderstanding of this being, this *essentia*, this *logos*, this meaning, and so he begins with an analysis of the being that *we* are, of *Dasein* as the place of this preunderstanding, this *Verstehen*. His 'forgetfulness of being' is the forgetfulness not of Aquinas's *esse*, as many Thomists have thought (and hoped), but of the temporality, the historicity, that conditions the preunderstanding, the fore-theoretical intelligibility, of the meaning or *logos* of being already given to us; indeed it is the forgetfulness of an already given, temporally and historically conditioned facticity.

More precisely, McGrath finds a link from 'Scotus's account of the intuition of the singular (*simplex apprehensio*)' to 'the young Heidegger's notion of "hermeneutical intuition" of the fore-theoretical forms of meaning that "live in life itself."' (2-3) The road from Scotus to Heidegger passes first through the little-known work of Thomas of Erfurt, whose 'grammatical modes' or *modi significandi* Heidegger studied in his

9 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 4: *The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity*, trans. Oliver Davies, Andrew Louth, Brian McNeil, John Saward, and Rowan Williams (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989) 330.

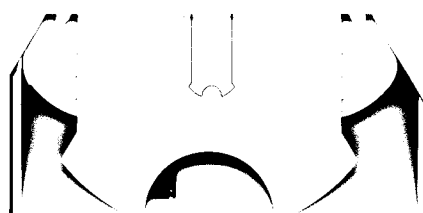
10 Numbers in parentheses in this section refer to pages in McGrath's paper.



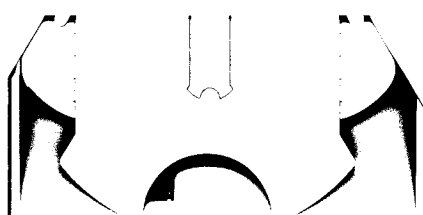
Habilitationsschrift of 1916, *The Categories and Theory of Meaning of Duns Scotus*, and then through Edmund Husserl's notion of categorial intuition. For all of these figures, knowledge is primarily intuition, and the truth of judgment or propositional truth is derivative, founded, secondary to the direct apprehension of being in the primal truth of *alêtheia*, unconcealment. Judgment can either enable or hinder unconcealment. It can allow 'the thing' to continue to show itself or it can cover it over again, and it is on this basis alone that judgment is true or false. Judgment, on this reading, is not the primary place of truth, through which alone as through a medium being is known. Heidegger writes that 'what is "true" ... is *aisthêsis*, the simple sense perception of something ... straightforward observant apprehension of the simplest determinations of the being of beings as such.' (3-4, Quoting from *Being and Time*, Stambaugh translation, 1996, p. 29)

Now Lonergan-influenced readers or listeners will at this point conclude that we have here simply another instance of the naive realism that regards knowing as looking. That Heidegger's formulation is problematic seems clear. But it certainly does not reflect the kind of naive realism exhibited in Gilson's perceptual judgment. And in fact, whatever may be the infelicities of Heidegger's expression, McGrath suggests (and I agree) that Heidegger makes a contribution that, mediated through Lonergan's notions of mediated immediacy and elemental meaning, can be retrieved and integrated into a position with which Lonergan and his students can and should agree. Thus, while what is at issue vis-à-vis Heidegger may be a matter of reversing a counterposition, that contribution may enable us to develop a position with the help of the reversed counterposition.

What Heidegger's contribution is begins to become more clear when we grasp that for Heidegger unconcealment is not intuition without expression, immediacy without 'language.' It is always and fundamentally mediated by 'language.' I put the word 'language' in inverted commas because it must be taken in a broad sense to include all the carriers of meaning: not only linguistic carriers in the strict sense, whether ordinary,



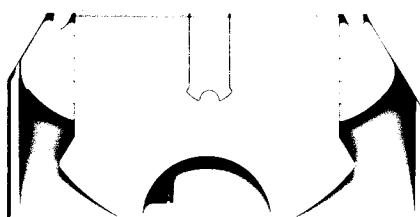
literary, or technical, but also art, intersubjectivity, symbol, and the incarnation of meaning in persons and their deeds. Primal truth, *alêtheia*, occurs for Heidegger only within such expressedness, and not at all as unmediated immediacy. As McGrath writes, 'We live in language [in this broad sense] and have no access to experience that is not permeated by language. The task of hermeneutical phenomenology is to loosen up the primal words through which life first expresses itself by dismantling the superstructure of theoretical judgments that conceal them. Phenomenology does not attach words to unexpressed intuitions; it goes along with the way historical life is already expressed for us and frees up more basic experiences of thinking. Heidegger annuls the traditional dichotomy between intuition and expression: the intuited is always already expressed; conversely, the primal expression is not the construction or projection of a subject but an intuited domain of meaning.' (4) Again, in Husserl's terms, 'The given is structured; it calls forth the category. Intuition is not exclusively sensuous; it includes a non-sensuous or categorial dimension.' (5) On McGrath's reading, which makes eminent sense to me, Scotus's doctrine of the pre-categorial intelligibility of the singular (*haecceitas*) is a precursor of Husserl's categorial intuition. For Heidegger, as McGrath interprets him, 'The ground of the thing known in a universal definition is an *actually* intelligible individual that is never fully comprehended by the concept. The actually intelligible fore-theoretical thing has a formal or ideal structure. Historically singularized, the individual speaks a primal word to us. This original *verbum*, which we might call the *verbum entis*, the word of being, makes possible the inner word of understanding, the *verbum interius*.' (5) Where Heidegger makes his own contribution to this effective history of Scotism, at least in his early work culminating in *Being and Time*, is in the discovery that 'if the singular is actually intelligible in its singularity, history cannot be disregarded as ineffable. History is a domain of fore-theoretical experience, which exhibits its own proper understandability, one that eludes the objectifications of categories and judgments. *Being and Time* develops this Scotistic-Husserlian insight into



a critique of the limitations of categorial knowledge, a retrieval of the primordial intelligibility of history, and the primal historicity of intelligibility.’ (5-6) I would suggest that we must go one step further: whatever approximately *actual* intelligibility may be attached to the singular is due solely to history in the broadest sense of that term, to include the whole universal process of emergent probability: that is, not to mere difference of particular places and particular times but to something different in the particular places and at the particular times.¹¹

On some Thomist readings, Heidegger’s attempt to deconstruct the definitions of theoretical thought back to their empirically given structures of understandability can lead, says McGrath, only to ‘mute sense data, not primally intelligible structure’ (17) or ‘a fore-theoretical understanding [*Verstehen*] of singular things’ (18). But it is *history* (and this is Heidegger’s contribution, beyond Scotus and Husserl) that is ‘the arena of concrete singularity prior to universalization by the intellect. To deny actual intelligibility to the singular is to deny an intelligibility proper to history.’ (22) That insistence may be broadened to include cosmic process. Thus, if I may develop an example suggested by Lonergan, or more accurately perhaps, if I may answer an objection that might be raised from the Lonergan side, indeed one that was raised at the seminar where McGrath presented his paper, while the chemical formula that indicates the intelligibility of one hydrogen atom and the chemical formula that indicates the intelligibility of another hydrogen atom are identical, still the fact that one hydrogen atom is part of a nuclear bomb and the other an element in a lake is not without significance and intelligibility. It is true that each hydrogen atom is able to do just what it does, whether in a bomb or in a lake, because of the precise intelligibility that they share in common. But in a very definite sense it is not the case that the *only* difference between them lies in the empirical residue of particular places and particular times, which in

¹¹ See Lonergan, *Insight* 52.

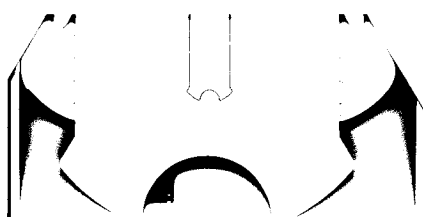


themselves have no significance. There is also something different in the particular places and at the particular times, a difference that is related to the respective 'histories' of the two hydrogen atoms.

Of course, this was not the kind of issue that Heidegger was concerned with, and so let us return to the point. On McGrath's reading, Heidegger fused Scotus's *haecceitas* and Husserl's categorial intuition, and so 'turned Husserl's reflective phenomenology into the "hermeneutics of facticity," a phenomenological investigation of the pre-categorial manifestations of historical being.' (23)

Now my earlier study of Heidegger leads me to add one point to what McGrath says expressly in his paper. The two linked and equiprimordial ways in which historical being is manifest to *Dasein* in a pre-theoretical fashion are called by Heidegger *Verstehen* and *Befindlichkeit*, sometimes translated, respectively, by 'understanding' and 'state of mind' or 'mood,' and these equiprimordial ways of being *Dasein* are themselves historically conditioned and linguistically determined, as is the historical being that becomes manifest to *Dasein* in these linked ways. As McGrath emphasizes, in the later Heidegger these yield to an attitude of *listening* to being, letting its primordial language speak, letting its primal words undo the accretions of linguistic determination that prevent our language from being 'the house of being.'

My own position, but one that, we will see, is at least suggested by McGrath, is that Lonergan's notions of mediated immediacy and elemental meaning capture the 'given intelligibility' that Heidegger is expressing in speaking of primally intelligible structures of historical facticity. And I will in a moment relate the same notions to Lonergan's distinction of the ordinary meaningfulness of everyday language and the original meaningfulness of language that expresses new discoveries, so as to link both Heidegger and Lonergan to Wittgenstein, while still preserving the unique contributions of each of these figures. I wish to suggest, though, that if we are going to appropriate items along these lines from Heidegger, we avoid using the term 'intuition,' which has so



many different meanings in philosophic currency that it is almost bound to be misunderstood.

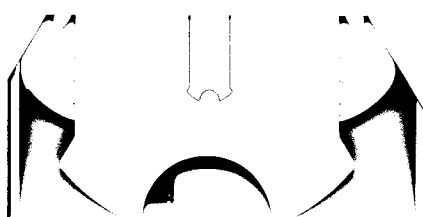
3 McGrath's 'Introductory Statement for LRI Presentation'¹²

As I indicated above, when McGrath presented his paper on Heidegger and Scotus at a seminar of the Lonergan Research Institute, he added an 'introductory statement' that was meant to focus the question for people with an interest in Lonergan. The paper itself makes some few references to Lonergan, but it is, as its title indicates, principally a paper on the relation of Heidegger to Scotus. But, as McGrath says in his introductory statement, 'If I am correct in characterizing Heidegger as a neo-Scotist, a dialogue between Heidegger and Lonergan will be in part a repetition of the dispute between Aquinas and Scotus' (1).¹³ On McGrath's interpretation, 'the heart of the issue is the question of our knowledge of singulars ... Heidegger's emphasis on the fore-theoretical understandability of life prior to explicit knowledge makes sense within a Scotistic horizon ... Scotus's pre-abstract intuition of singulars becomes Heidegger's fore-theoretical grasp of temporality, what he describes as our "average and vague understanding of being in which we are always already involved and which ultimately belongs to the essential constitution of *Dasein* itself"' (1, quoting *Being and Time*, Stambaugh translation, p. 6).

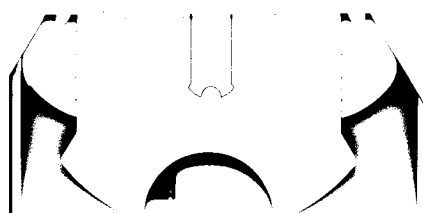
In his introductory statement to the seminar McGrath is asking whether some alternative philosophy of the fore-theoretical is possible within a Thomist account of the structure of cognition, and what Lonergan might contribute to that alternative philosophy. My efforts here are an attempt to respond to *that* question. I am convinced that McGrath

¹² In this section numbers in parentheses refer to pages in the 'Introductory Statement.'

¹³ The last four words of this sentence would be better phrased 'between Scotus and Aquinas.' McGrath's point is that Heidegger stands to Lonergan as Scotus to Aquinas: not of course in a temporal sense, since much of Heidegger's key works antedate Lonergan's writing, while Scotus wrote after Aquinas.



is correct when he says that ‘we will miss an opportunity to develop this issue beyond a sterile impasse if we *reduce* this to a case of a philosopher maintaining “a counter-position,” “knowing as looking.”’ For ‘if Heidegger holds the primacy of intuition over abstraction, he challenges the disjunction between intuition and expression typical of theories of knowing as intuiting ... the intuited is not necessarily unexpressed. Language is not primarily the product of an intellectual act that defines essence. There are “primal words,” expressions which precede’ inner words (1-2, emphasis mine). (It is important to recall that McGrath is not referring only to linguistic meaning in the strict sense of that term, but to all the carriers in which meaning is presented to us.) The question, then, is, Is there any way within a basically Thomist framework, as Lonergan would understand such a framework, that we can not only allow but also account for such given intelligibility, in a way that avoids not only the ambiguities, indeed the Scotist remnants, of Heideggerian expression but also the naive realism of many Scholastic variants of Thomism? Does Lonergan offer any way in which we may speak of a *formal* and *actual* intelligibility of the contextual and temporal singulars of life as we receive them empirically? Is there any way to allow and account for not only a *Befindlichkeit* in empirical consciousness – that is clear and probably undisputed – but also a *Verstehen* that is not Lonergan’s insight as an immanently generated actuation, but rather a *received* and vague understanding and perhaps judgment and evaluation, whether ‘right’ or ‘wrong,’ that informs the very reception of data in the movement from above? Is there a *Verstehen* that is preconceptual not in the sense that it gives rise to concepts as inner words, but in the sense that, however much it issues from the sedimented accumulation of conceptual frameworks that function in one’s linguistic community, still it precedes even the intelligent inquiry on the part of the subject that leads to that subject’s own insights and conceptualizations in inner words or original meaningfulness, and then on to his or her reflective understanding and judgments of fact and value? Is there a way of speaking



positionally, not counterpositionally, of a 'given intelligibility' that is in some way formal and sometimes actual, and not merely potential?¹⁴

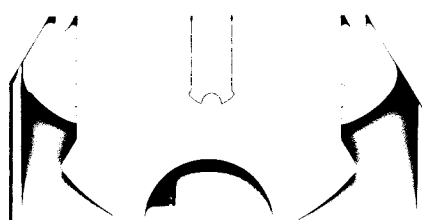
After an attempt at formulating the Heidegger-Lonergan dialectic in terms of a Scholastic *quaestio*, McGrath makes a suggestion of his own that I think points in the right direction. 'The later Lonergan develops distinctions that may be relevant here, in particular the notion of "a mediated return to immediacy" and the notion of "elemental meaning" ... "Elemental meaning" seems to touch Heidegger's notion of fore-theoretical understandability.' Let me briefly develop this suggestion in a way that, if I'm at all on the right track, might provide at least the first steps in a solution to the questions posed thus far.

4 Elemental Meaning

The categories of 'mediated immediacy' and 'elemental meaning' suggest an expansion of our usual understanding of empirical consciousness, so that it is probably better designated in a generic way as 'reception.'

Now a problem presents itself immediately in what I am saying. For the category of 'elemental meaning' in Lonergan's writings does not refer exclusively to what I am suggesting we might call the level of 'reception,' so that a one-to-one correspondence of empirical consciousness and elemental meaning is not possible. The subject's own immanently generated insights are also instances of elemental meaning, and they occur at a quite distinct level of consciousness, for Lonergan and for me. What characterizes elemental meaning is that the distinction of subject and object has not yet arisen. Not only is it the case that the sense in act is the sensible in act, but also it is the case that the intellect in act, and very much in act in the 'Eureka!' of insight, is the intelligible in act.

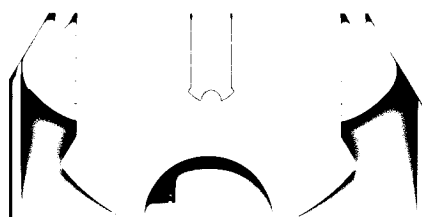
¹⁴ I believe the issue has to be put this way, rather than in the language of 'fore-theoretical' that McGrath employs. Such an expression assumes that every inner word issuing from insight is theoretical, and that is hardly the case.



‘Knowledge by identity’ means there is a preconceptual unity of knower and known, whether in sensation or in the act of insight. But my question is whether we may also speak of an elemental identity of ‘knower’ and ‘known’ that, because it occurs in something like that act that Heidegger calls *Verstehen*, is not simply a matter of sense in act and sensible in act, but that, because it is also not a matter of immanently generated insight, of original meaningfulness, but rather of meaningful data in the sense of ordinary meaningfulness, is a form of empirical consciousness. Is there some kind of identity of what Scholastic language calls ‘intellect in act’ and ‘intelligible in act’ in the *empirical* consciousness of a subject who is intelligent and potentially reasonable and responsible? Is this not precisely what is meant by speaking of ‘mediated immediacy’? (Sean McGrath, in an email correspondence to me after he read an earlier draft of this paper, spoke of an *illuminatio* before insight into phantasm.)

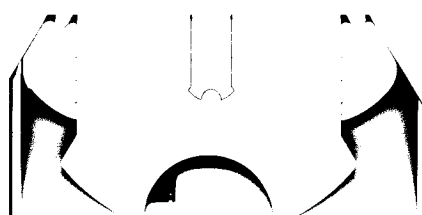
In addition to the elemental meaning of acts of sensing and acts of insight as immanently generated knowledge, Lonergan speaks of the elemental ‘meaning of the smile that acts simply as an intersubjective determinant, the meaning of the work of art prior to its interpretation by a critic, the meaning of the symbol performing its office of internal communication without help from the therapist.’¹⁵ Can we not extend that category thus understood to many of the data that occur to us? As the dreams of the morning are the dreams of an intelligent subject, and so are already invested with meaning, may we not say that most of the data received by such a subject are already invested with a meaning that is a function of historical facticity, of personal and communal history? Is this meaning not elemental in the same sense as the smile or the work of art or the symbol, and yet in a sense that is different from the merely potential meaning of sensation? Further distinctions, of course, remain to be made, for at least the meaning of the smile is something that is not learned. It is natural and spontaneous. It

¹⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 74.



does not have the same character of historical sedimentation that many of the other received data to which I am referring exhibit. Still, this empirical givenness of structured meaning is, I think, at least akin to Heidegger's point.

Moreover, this received meaning functions effectively and constitutively in the lives of those to whom it occurs. It does so even before they have subjected that meaning to critical examination, to a 'critique of beliefs,' if you will. Thus may I suggest that that meaning possesses an intelligibility that is more than the *merely* potential intelligibility of sense data but also less than formal and actual intelligibility in the strict sense. And so I ask, May we distinguish in empirical consciousness understood as reception whether from below or from above between the merely potential meaning of acts of sensing and the meaning of other received data that are invested with some kind of at least devalued formal and perhaps actual or full intelligibility? I don't think the effective and constitutive functions of meaning can be exercised by merely potential intelligibility, and I do think that the mediated data of received intelligibility function effectively and constitutively in our lives. It is true that formal and actual intelligibility in the strict sense are a function of what Lonergan calls original meaningfulness, that is, of immanently generated knowledge and of the assent of faith in the fullest sense of that term. And the received intelligibility that I am suggesting is also the historical product of the original meaningfulness of the insights, judgments, and decisions of others who have preceded us, or of their biases, their failures to be intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, or of some combination of intelligence and bias. Still, in the set of questions that I raised earlier, I suggested that we may speak of a formal and perhaps actual intelligibility at the level of reception. Indeed, if it is at all legitimate for Heidegger to use the word *Verstehen* as expressing the cognitive component of *Dasein*, there must be operative something more than the merely potential meaning of acts of sensing. But I wish now to qualify my earlier suggestion by asking whether we need to speak perhaps of something like 'minor' and 'major' formal and actual intelligibility. What I am suggesting we might call 'minor



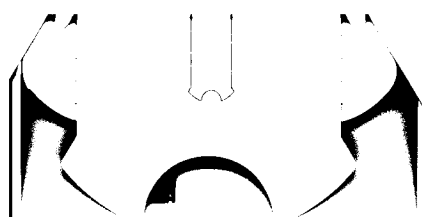
formal intelligibility' and 'minor actual intelligibility' are connected with what Lonergan calls the 'ordinary meaningfulness' of publicly sedimented expression as this expression mediates the reception of data, and what I am suggesting we might call 'major formal intelligibility' and 'major actual intelligibility' are connected with what he calls 'original meaningfulness,' that is, with what proceeds (in the sense of *emanatio intelligibilis*) when the subject stands on his or her own two feet, raises his or her own questions for intelligence, reflection, and deliberation, answers these questions in acts of understanding and in judgments of fact and value, and formulates the answers in inner and outer words that contribute eventually, sooner or later, to the communal fund of ordinary meaningfulness.

5 Some Related Considerations

5.1 *An Analogy with Functional Specialization*

Perhaps it might help if we suggest an analogy between what Lonergan calls the levels of intentional consciousness as they function in everyday living and the same levels as they function in distinct functional specialties in a discipline like theology. More precisely, let us consider a possible analogy between empirical consciousness as it functions in everyday living and empirical consciousness as it sets the objectives of the functional specialty 'research.' Is any analogy possible? Is it the case that, as with the functional specialty 'research' in a highly specialized discipline such as theology, so too in a more compact way in our everyday living, all four sets of conscious operations work together as one receives data?

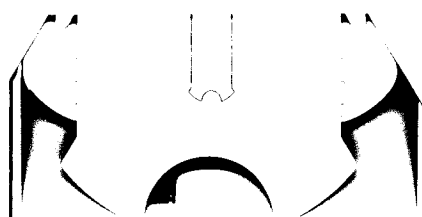
Now in one very definite sense, the answer to the second question must be no. Work in the functional specialty of research is a fully deliberate, chosen set of projects; moreover, the mediated object of research consists in the data that will be subjected to



interpretation, and those data are the product of immanently generated acts of insight, judgment, and decision, as, for example, in the production of a critical text. I am not suggesting a similar functional specialization in everyday, commonsense performance; there is no such specialization, and that is the difference in the analogy.

Still, the data that are received by the subject of ordinary waking consciousness (or for that matter, by the dreamer in the 'dreams of the morning') are already invested with a meaning that functions effectively and constitutively. These data are not mere data of sense or of consciousness arising in a state of unmediated immediacy. To speak of them as if they were is to engage in abstraction. They are rather already mediated by meaning to a subject whose empirical consciousness receiving them is the empirical consciousness of someone intelligent. They are received by *Verstehen* in what I believe may be Heidegger's sense of that term, namely, the human apprehensive component at the level of reception. I suggest, then, that Heidegger's speaking of *Verstehen* in a sense that means something different from Lonergan's 'insight' is a legitimate way of referring to a cognitive component at the level of reception in an intelligent subject. That cognitive component is not simply the experience of raw sense data or of unmediated data of consciousness. It is already invested with meaning, with an 'already given intelligibility,' with what I am suggesting we call 'minor formal and actual intelligibility.'

More strictly, *Verstehen* as understanding in this minor or devalued sense yields minor *formal* intelligibility. What accounts in this case for the judgmental component in the mediated immediacy of the subject — the judgmental component that is required for any intelligibility to approximate 'actual intelligibility' or 'full meaning' in Lonergan's sense of those terms — may be a function of one or more of at least three things: the 'always with us' quality of previous judgments, belief, or a suspicious suspension of belief. 'Belief' here can range all the way from comfortable embeddedness in a commonsense environment to religious belonging, and from these to something like the 'trust in being' that, I seem to remember, Erik Erikson suggests we either develop by the



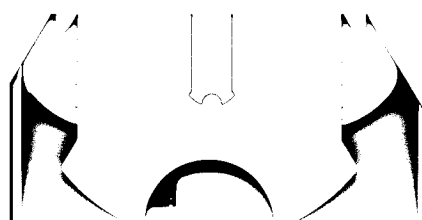
age of four or go through life lacking, short of (I would add) the frequent miracles of grace. In the suspension of belief, perhaps, we are talking more of *Befindlichkeit* than of *Verstehen*, more of 'state of mind' than of cognitive apprehension. But in either case, the component of belief or unbelief is the function, proximately of the personal history of the subject within the history of his or her community or network of communities (what Lonergan calls minor authenticity or unauthenticity), and remotely and far more radically of the communal history of that network itself (Lonergan's major authenticity or unauthenticity). Here, of course, I am using the terms 'major' and 'minor,' not in the sense of my suggestion of 'major and minor formal and actual intelligibility,' but in Lonergan's sense when he speaks of authentic and unauthentic existing.

...existing may be authentic or unauthentic, and this may occur in two different ways. There is the minor authenticity or unauthenticity of the subject with respect to the tradition that nourishes him. There is the major authenticity that justifies or condemns the tradition itself. In the first case there is passed a human judgment on subjects. In the second case history and, ultimately, divine providence pass judgment on traditions.¹⁶

5.2 Ordinary Meaningfulness and Original Meaningfulness

Again, we may say that in the lives of each of us there is an intricate symbiosis of what, in one text alone (but a text that is extremely important), Lonergan refers to as ordinary meaningfulness and original meaningfulness. I have already anticipated that discussion

16 Ibid. 80. I hope it does not complicate things too much to suggest that the major authenticity or inauthenticity issues in the minor formal and actual intelligibility of presentations. If these are traceable to inauthenticity, then the major formal and actual intelligibility of the subject's creative operations is what can restore some integrity to the tradition.

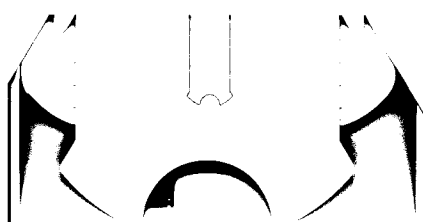


several times, but allow me, please, a longer quotation at this point, with several interpolations of my own indicated by the brackets.

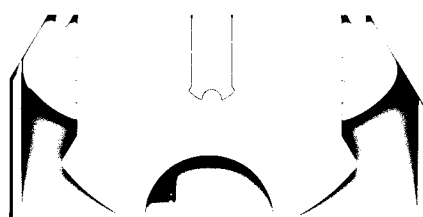
... the ordinary meaningfulness of ordinary language is essentially public and only derivatively private. For language is ordinary if it is in common use. It is in common use, not because some isolated individual happens to have decided what it is to mean, but because all the individuals of the relevant group understand what it means. Similarly, it is by performing expressed mental acts that children and foreigners come to learn a language. But they learn the language by learning how it ordinarily is used, so that their private knowledge of ordinary usage is derived from the common usage that essentially is public. [We may say the same, *mutatis mutandis*, of the ordinary meaningfulness of most other carriers of meaning, though some, like the smile, are 'natural and spontaneous.']

... what is true of the ordinary meaningfulness of ordinary language is not true of the original meaningfulness of any language, ordinary, literary, or technical. [By extension, we may say that it is also not true of the original meaningfulness of other carriers of meaning.] For all language develops and, at any time, any language [or any other set of public carriers of meaning] consists in the sedimentation of the developments that have occurred and have not become obsolete. Now developments consist in discovering new uses for existing words [or for other carriers of meaning], in inventing new words, and in diffusing the discoveries and inventions. All three are a matter of expressed mental acts. The discovery of a new usage is a mental act expressed by the new usage. The invention of a new word is a mental act expressed by the new word ...¹⁷

17 Ibid. 255-56.



While Lonergan introduces the distinction of ordinary meaningfulness and original meaningfulness as a response to a Wittgensteinian objection to his position – and it is a legitimate response that in principle resolves many of the issues that Wittgensteinians might raise about Lonergan’s work – it is also applicable *mutatis mutandis* to questions that might be presented from a Heideggerian perspective. What Heidegger is talking about when he insists on the preconceptual or fore-theoretical (or, in the terms that I am suggesting, ‘given’) intelligibility of the temporal and contextual contingencies of life is a subspecies of Lonergan’s category of ordinary meaningfulness. And what Lonergan is talking about on almost every page of his writings, or at least what he is emphasizing and what represents his unique contribution to all of these discussions, is not the ordinary meaningfulness of historical facticity but the original meaningfulness that is responsible for ‘healing and creating in history.’ The two are not opposed, since in different ways one flows into the other. The original meaningfulness of one generation or even of one period in one’s own life becomes the ordinary meaningfulness of a later generation or period, and problems with regard to ordinary meaningfulness give rise to the questions that issue in original meaningfulness. There is no reason for a philosophy or a theology to feel required to choose between them. The Scotist-inspired Heideggerian tendency and the Wittgensteinian tendency, whether Scotist-inspired or not, is to emphasize the ordinary meaningfulness of the public sedimentations as what is essential and to consider the original meaningfulness that issues from so-called mental acts as at best derivative. *That*, and not naive realism in the simple sense, would be the counterposition in these views. To appeal to Lonergan’s dialectic of concept and performance, we might say that Wittgenstein and, perhaps to a greater degree, Heidegger display a great deal of original meaningfulness and ingenuity in their talk about ordinary meaningfulness. But Lonergan students should take care not so to stress the interior operations that give rise to original meaningfulness as to pass over in silence or even denial the fact that ordinarily, that is, in



the ordinary meaningfulness of everyday life, we start from publicly sedimented expressions already invested with meaning.

5.3 *Understanding Data and Understanding Facts*

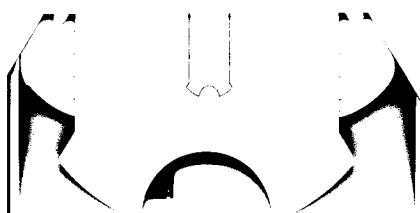
The distinction of ordinary and original meaningfulness may be related as well to the distinction of 'two orders or types of knowledge,' namely, understanding data and understanding facts. Again, while the latter distinction is introduced in a very specific context, in order to allow Lonergan to explain how systematics can be a matter of understanding what one already holds to be true, and so how systematics can be distinguished from doctrines, it is pertinent beyond that context. Lonergan writes:

Now one can understand data and one can understand facts. The understanding of data is expressed in hypotheses, and the verification of hypotheses leads to probable assertions. The understanding of facts is a more complicated matter, for it supposes the existence of two types or orders of knowledge, where *the facts of the first type supply the data for the second type* ...

Now the peculiarity of such understanding of facts is that two orders or types of knowledge call for two applications of the notion of truth. There is the truth of the facts in the first order or type. There is also the truth of the account or explanation reached in the second type or order. Moreover, while initially the second depends on the first, ultimately the two are interdependent, for the second can lead to a correction of the first.¹⁸

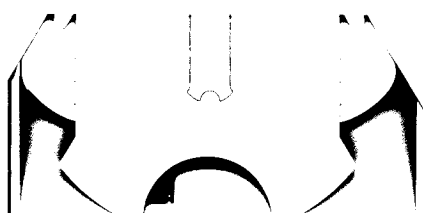
The distinction admits of many examples. The proximate occasion for the distinction as it appears in *Method in Theology* is, as I said, the problem of finding a way to characterize the peculiarity of the functional specialty 'systematics' in relation to the

¹⁸ Ibid. 348, emphasis added.



functional specialty 'doctrines.' The task of systematics is not the understanding of data, except insofar as the facts established by doctrines are taken as the data that systematics attempts to understand. But we may also say that the truth of the doctrines, accepted as truth, functions constitutively in authentic Christian living. Moreover, however much precisely as *doctrinal* truth it is expressed in propositions, it can be carried also in art and symbols and intersubjectivity and the incarnate meaning of persons and their deeds, and precisely through such carriers functions constitutively even when the propositions are not understood in any sophisticated fashion. And as it so functions, it may be likened to Heidegger's *alêtheia* or unconcealment. Here the facts of the first type of knowledge supply the data for the second type. Then the truth of any new systematic understanding of the doctrines (such as Lonergan's four-point hypothesis linking the divine relations to created graces)¹⁹ can be likened to the truth of the original meaningfulness that proceeds from the theologian's reflective understanding that his or her hypothesis is probably an acceptable set of analogues that gives us some imperfect glimpse of the meaning of the primal truth known judgmentally in doctrine and received as a given intelligibility in belief. Doctrinal truth thus functions, or at least through genuine communications can be made to function, in the life of the community as a linguistic expression of a primal truth disclosed to believers. And in systematics it is submitted to further scrutiny by theologians attempting to understand it in a manner that approximates explanation. When Thomas Aquinas spoke of procession in God, he was employing what had become ordinary language in his faith tradition. But when he said that procession in God was *emanatio intelligibilis*, he was exhibiting the original meaningfulness of language, an original meaningfulness that was completely a function of his understanding of what

19 Bernard Lonergan, *De Deo trino, Pars systematica* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964) 234-35. For one reading of the significance of this hypothesis, see Robert M. Doran, 'The Unified Field Structure for Systematic Theology: A Proposal.' This paper was presented at the 2002 Lonergan Workshop, and in a revised form was delivered as the inaugural Bernard Lonergan Lecture in Systematic Theology at Regis College, Toronto, on 1 November 2002.



divine procession had to be, an original meaningfulness that in this case subsequent theologians have rarely understood, and so one that has not really become ordinary meaningfulness even some seven centuries later, one moreover that is best understood if one submits to Lonergan's own maieutic of intelligent, reasonable, and responsible operations, that is, if one appropriates one's own acts of original meaningfulness.

5.4 *Revelation and Reception*

I begin this subsection with some citations from Lonergan. 'The word of God, the revelation God makes to man, is a matter of meaning ... that revelation ... would not be at all what [it is] without meaning.'²⁰ That meaning, moreover, is a reality. 'Our conscious living and the meaning that it carries are just as real as the realities of the spirit, and they do not belong to some shadowy world that really does not count. One mistakes the whole significance of meaning if one does not get that point correct: "intentional" is not opposed to "real."'²¹ In this sense, then, Lonergan speaks in the same context of an ontology of meaning and an ethics of meaning.²² And it is in this sense of the reality and morality of meaning that we can 'see the full impact and the full import of divine revelation. Revelation is God's entering into the world of human meaning.'²³ Again, the 'Word of God is God's entry into human reality as constituted by meaning.'²⁴ And the

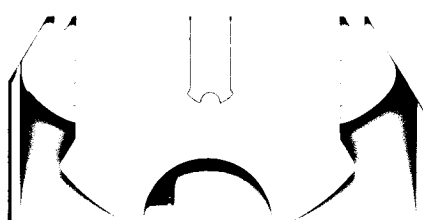
20 Bernard Lonergan, 'Time and Meaning,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 6, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 104-105.

21 Ibid. 105.

22 For a development of the notion of the ontology of meaning, see chapter 19 in my book *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 2001).

23 Bernard Lonergan, 'The Analogy of Meaning,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964* 205-206.

24 Ibid. 206 note 50.



Word of God in this context may be 'taken as the word of the Bible, or the word of tradition, or the incarnate Word that is the incarnate meaning of the Son of God.'²⁵

The ontological status of meaning is suggested again in the headings of the first two sections of the final chapter of *Method in Theology*, 'Meaning and Ontology' and 'Common Meaning and Ontology.' The first section will help me speak of revelation, and the second of reception.

'Meaning and Ontology' emphasizes that the four functions of meaning – cognitive, constitutive, communicative, and effective – have an ontological aspect. As cognitive, acts of meaning intend what is real. As constitutive, meaning 'constitutes part of the reality of the one that means': one's horizon, one's assimilative powers, one's knowledge, one's values, one's character. As communicative, meaning 'induces in the hearer some share in the cognitive, constitutive, or effective meaning of the speaker.' And as effective, meaning 'persuades or commands others or it directs [our] control over nature.'²⁶ Lonergan goes on:

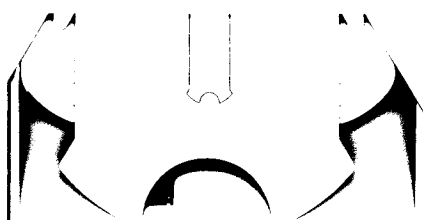
Such ontological aspects pertain to meaning, no matter what its content or its carrier. They are found then in all the diverse stages of meaning, in all the diverse cultural traditions, in any of the differentiations of consciousness, and in the presence and absence of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Again, they pertain to meaning, whether its carrier is intersubjectivity or art or symbol or exemplary or abominable conduct or everyday or literary or technical language.²⁷

To these indications I suggest that we add Lonergan's earlier point regarding the relative dominance of the dialectic of community vis-à-vis the dialectic of the subject. And we might add the relative dominance of the dialectic of culture as well, provided the notion

²⁵ Ibid. 206.

²⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 356.

²⁷ Ibid.

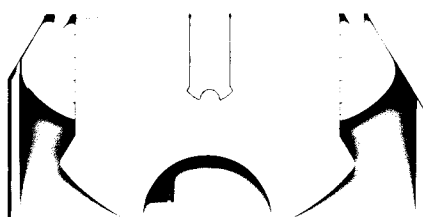


of the dialectic of culture is valid.²⁸ This relative dominance means that the horizon of the subject in his or her world, a horizon constituted by meaning, along with the world that is correlative to that horizon, are, prior to critical reflection on the part of the subject, largely a function of what Heidegger's language calls temporal and historical facticity, of 'being thrown' into existence in the world at this particular time and with these particular people, with their own horizons similarly determined for them by historical dialectics over which at the outset they have no control. All of this 'gives rise to the situations that stimulate neural demands, and it molds the orientation of intelligence that preconsciously exercises the censorship,'²⁹ so that the very reception of data that are also invested with meaning is itself constitutive of the subject's horizon. And it is precisely at this level, I think, that God's entrance into the world of human meaning takes place. Avery Dulles is on to this when, in his book *Models of Revelation*, he departs from 'model thinking' and takes his own stand, in a chapter in which he argues that divine revelation is best conceived along the lines of symbolic communication.³⁰ As we move to develop a theology of revelation in a systematic theology that finds its base in Lonergan – and revelation is not a theme to which Lonergan himself devoted a great deal of explicit theological attention – it is this level of elemental meaning, of the already given intelligibility of received data, that we have to ponder. God's entrance into the world of human meaning is God's effecting transformations in that already given intelligibility of 'world' that is correlative to our horizons – effecting transformations through the cognitive, constitutive, communicative, and effective functions of God's own meaning, of God's original meaningfulness, and ultimately of God's incarnate meaning, God's incarnate Logos, God's incarnate Word, the Son of the eternal Father, crucified, dead, and risen from the dead.

28 See Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, part 4 passim.

29 Lonergan, *Insight* 243.

30 Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1985) 131-54.



'Common Meaning and Ontology' is relevant to the dominant dialectics of community and, by extension, of culture. The 'formal constituent' of the community whose dialectic exerts a relative dominance over the dialectic of the subject is common meaning. Moreover, 'such common meaning is doubly constitutive. In each individual, it is constitutive of the individual as a member of the community. In the group of individuals it is constitutive of the community.'³¹ Its genesis is 'an ongoing process of communication, of people coming to share the same cognitive, constitutive, and effective meanings.'³² There are more and less serious divisions resultant from divergent meanings. The serious divisions are those that arise from 'the presence and absence of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.'³³ Radical dialectical opposition then affects 'community, action, situation. It affects community for, just as common meaning is constitutive of community, so dialectic divides community into radically opposed groups. It affects action for, just as conversion leads to intelligent, reasonable, responsible action, so dialectic adds division, conflict, oppression. It affects the situation, for situations are the cumulative product of previous actions and, when previous actions have been guided by the light and darkness of dialectic, the resulting situation [which, remember, stimulates neural demands] is not some intelligible whole but rather a set of misshapen, poorly proportioned, and incoherent fragments.'³⁴

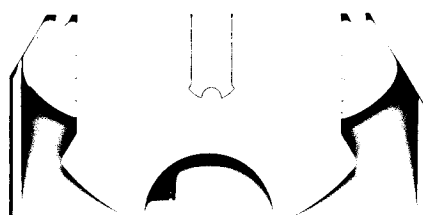
Now the 'state,' as it were, of the community, whether the community be religious or civil or some combination of both, affects the receptivity of both individuals and groups to the entrance of God's meaning into the world of human meaning through God's symbolic self-communication or revelation. In the wonderful sixth chapter of his *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*, Lonergan distinguished the habit of grace from the state of grace, and explicitly treated the state of grace as an intersubjective, indeed a social

31 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 357.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid. 358.

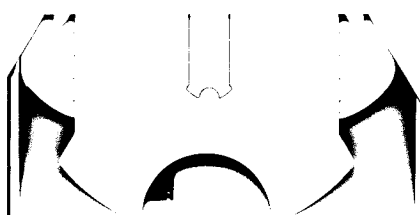


reality. '... the state or situation of grace refers to many different subjects together. Thus to constitute the state of grace there are required (1) the Father who loves, (2) the Son because of whom the Father loves, (3) the Holy Spirit in whom the Father loves and gives gifts, and (4) the just, who because of the Son are loved by the Father in the Holy Spirit, who consequently are endowed with sanctifying grace, whence flow the virtues and gifts, and who are thereby just and upright and open to receiving and eliciting acts that are directed toward eternal life.'³⁵ This 'divine-human interpersonal situation' (ibid.) is not simply a situation affecting four subjects: three of them divine and one human. Rather, the Latin term that is here translated 'the just,' namely, 'iusti,' is plural. It may be interpreted as signifying a community of subjects, so that when Lonergan writes that 'by reason of this state the divine persons and the just are within one another as those who are known are within those who know them and those who are loved are within those who love them,'³⁶ we may read him as referring to a communion of the divine subjects with a community of human subjects. In this sense, he may be said to have anticipated a contemporary discussion by explicitly treating 'the state of grace' as a social reality. Just as theologians some thirty years ago placed stress on sin as social and spoke of sinful social structures, so today we are coming to emphasize the reality of grace-filled social structures.

The dominance of the dialectic of community over the dialectic of the subject means that the relations of the present of the subject to the past are relations not only to the subject's own past but also to the past of his or her community or network of communities. And these relations decisively affect the orientation or habitual context within which the reception of data occurs. These relations decisively affect what for any given subject in whatever milieu constitutes ordinary meaningfulness. That ordinary

35 Bernard Lonergan, *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964) 257-58; the translation is by Michael Shields, in preparation for the Collected Works edition.

36 Ibid.



meaningfulness may be more or less sinful, more or less under the influence of grace. Revelation as God's entrance into the human world of meaning shifts the probabilities in favor of graced ordinary meaningfulness. And that shift in probabilities affects the reception, or better, the receptive potential, of subjects in community to the divine meaning intended by God when God enters our world of meaning.

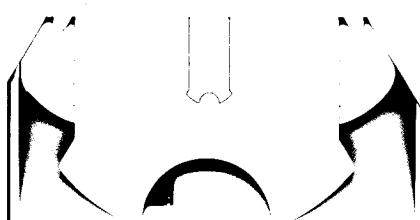
Much more could be said about the theology of reception in its ecclesial significance, but this is not the place for that. Let me just indicate that I believe that the ecclesial notion of reception, as in 'reception of church teaching,' must be understood in this context of the meaning of revelation and of human reception of God's entrance into our world of meaning.

5.5 Revisiting the Notion of Psychic Conversion

I said at the beginning of this paper that McGrath's presentation to the Lonergan Research Institute seminar was an occasion for me to revisit the notion of psychic conversion and to expand it a bit so that it could meet the proportions of its original emergence. For the occasion of the original insight was research on a paper on the Heideggerian roots of Rudolf Bultmann's hermeneutical theory. I was reading *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* and taking extensive notes on this very important work of Heidegger's, when the notion of psychic conversion emerged. In most of the explanations of what I mean by psychic conversion I have focused on a release into an openness on the part of intentional consciousness to the *Befindlichkeit* dimension of *Dasein*. I have addressed dramatic bias and scotosis, and acknowledged the need to extend this discussion to the organic. Scotosis is the sort of thing that Max Scheler refers to in the following words:

Beyond all conscious lying and falsifying, there is a deeper 'organic mendacity.'

Here the falsification is not formed in consciousness but at the same stage of the



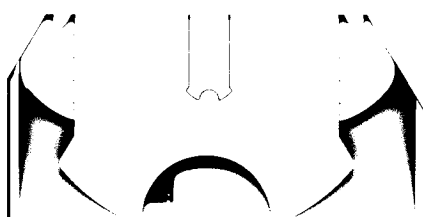
mental process as the impressions and value feelings themselves: *on the road* of experience into consciousness. There is 'organic mendacity' whenever a man's mind admits only those impressions and feelings which serve his 'interest' or his instinctive attitude. Already in the process of mental reproduction and recollection, the contents of his experience are modified in this direction. He who is 'mendacious' has no need to lie! In his case, the automatic process of forming recollections, impressions, and feelings is involuntarily slanted, so that conscious falsification becomes unnecessary.³⁷

And so I have stressed how important it is that intentional consciousness take cognizance of the underlying 'tidal movement that begins before consciousness, unfolds through sensitivity, intelligence, rational reflection, responsible deliberation, only to find its rest beyond all of these,' in 'being in love.'³⁸ As beginning before consciousness that tidal movement reveals itself in our dreams. As unfolding through sensitivity, intelligence, rational reflection, and responsible deliberation, it is experienced in our feelings, both intentional and nonintentional – and I have suggested that nonintentional feelings may be more important than might be obvious from reading Lonergan, especially if Ignatian 'consolation without a cause,' as consolation with a content but without an apprehended object, must be understood as having an original nonintentional moment, at least in the sense that it is not a response to such an object.³⁹ And as finding rest beyond the levels of intentional consciousness, the tidal movement is the operator of community. But what I overlooked in my earlier presentation, or simply assumed that Lonergan was providing, was, in Heidegger's terms, the *Verstehen* component of *Dasein*. I believe now that Heidegger's *Verstehen* is not Lonergan's insight as a release to the tension of inquiry,

37 Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, trans. William W. Holdheim (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961) 77-78.

38 Bernard Lonergan, 'Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,' in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) 174-75.

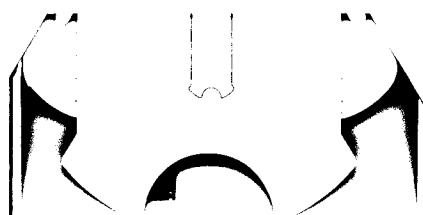
39 More work needs to be done on this issue.



whether that insight be direct, inverse, or reflective, but rather an intelligent component that is at work in the very reception of data. If that is the case, and if what I called psychic conversion is indeed a habitual *conversio ad phantasma*, a habitual being-at-home with, not being alienated from, the stream of an empirical consciousness that receives data mediated by meaning, then psychic conversion is a retrieval or re-establishing of a link between the inquiring and critical spirit and the mediated immediacy of that empirical consciousness. At the first Lonergan Workshop, in 1974, I spoke of a 'psychic rift' for which I was attempting to find some healing. And by that expression, 'psychic rift,' I meant not only dramatic bias, from 'below,' but also something very much like what Heidegger perhaps is naming when he speaks of the forgetfulness of Being, at least if he means the forgetfulness of an already given, temporally and historically conditioned facticity that is mediated by meaning, from 'above.'

6 The Question of Truth

Still, any effort such as the present one to mediate Heidegger and Lonergan cannot avoid the question of truth. The two thinkers present two very different notions of truth. And the same could be said in comparing von Balthasar's *Wahrnehmen* and Lonergan's notion of truth as issuing from a grasp of the virtually unconditioned. Two papers of Lonergan's point the way beyond an impasse, I think, namely, the first two of the Donald Mathers Lectures delivered at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, in 1976, 'Religious Experience' and 'Religious Knowledge.' The overall objective of the three lectures that Lonergan delivered in this series is to work out 'a single but complex viewpoint' that would regard religious studies and theology as 'distinct and complementary' disciplines. That is not my concern here. But the first two of the lectures contain material that I find directly pertinent to the issues of this paper.



I must be brief. 'Experience,' in the paper 'Religious Experience,' does not mean the whole of knowledge (one possible meaning for the term 'experience,' as when we speak of a person of experience) but 'an element within a larger compound, an infrastructure that easily is unnoticed until it is rounded off in combination with a manifold of further elements.'⁴⁰ In science, a distinction is made between a scientific hypothesis and the data to which it appeals, but even the data as appealed to are not yet the infrastructure that corresponds to 'experience.' For as appealed to, the data are named, and the naming supposes the scientific suprastructure with its technical language, as well as the earlier ordinary language that one employed before learning the science and that one continues to employ in one's everyday living.

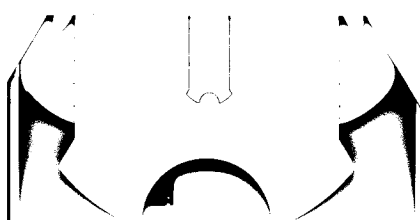
Only when one goes behind ordinary language and commonsense knowing does one come to the infrastructure in its pure form. It is pure experience, the experience underpinning and distinct from every suprastructure. As outer experience it is sensation as distinct from perception. As inner experience it is consciousness as distinct not only from self-knowledge but also from any introspective process that goes from the data of consciousness and moves towards the acquisition of self-knowledge.⁴¹

Still, Lonergan tells us in *Insight* 'how abstract it is to speak of a sensation,' since all acts of sensing, all activities of what here is called 'outer experience,' 'occur in some dynamic context that somehow unifies a manifold of sensed contents and of acts of sensing.'⁴² Moreover, the data of consciousness, of 'inner experience,' are the very operations not only of sensing and perceiving, but also of inquiring, understanding, conceiving, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned, affirming, deliberating, evaluating, deciding, and

40 Bernard Lonergan, 'Religious Experience,' in *A Third Collection* 127.

41 Ibid. 116-17.

42 Lonergan, *Insight* 204-205.



of the feelings that accompany these and that change as different operations are performed. They are these operations and states, not as named but as experienced. These operations and states, precisely as experienced, and whether they are named or not, are precisely the operations and states that effect 'the world mediated and constituted by meaning.'

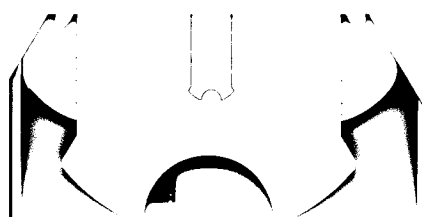
Thus it is, in the language of the paper 'Religious Experience,' that 'we become normal human beings only by mastering vast systems of symbols and adapting our muscles, our nerves, our cerebral cortex, to respond to them accurately and precisely.'⁴³ In this sense 'the cultivation of religious experience is its entry into harmony with the rest of one's symbolic system, and as symbolic systems vary with the culture and the civilization, so too does the cultivation of religious experience.'⁴⁴ Already we are removed, then, from the 'pure experience' that is nothing but infrastructure. Already we are the subjects of symbolic systems that mediate the world by meaning.

But within this framework there arises the question of the validity or objectivity or truth of the various symbolic systems. The paper 'Religious Knowledge' addresses this issue precisely with respect to religious convictions. '... how can one tell whether one's appropriation of religion is genuine or unauthentic and, more radically, how can one tell one is not appropriating a religious tradition that has become unauthentic [?]'⁴⁵ The question can be generalized, to extend to the other components of one's historically and culturally inherited symbol system. There may be no more significant question in the whole of human life than this: how can I tell whether the convictions that I have been taught to live by are a function of a tradition or set of traditions that have become unauthentic? Or to use language that we found useful earlier, how can I judge whether the ordinary meaningfulness that constitutes my present horizon, historically and

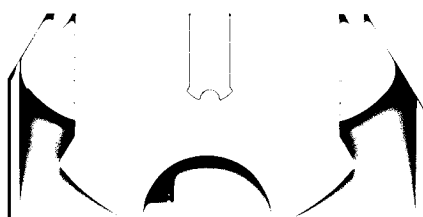
43 Lonergan, 'Religious Experience' 127.

44 Ibid.

45 Bernard Lonergan, 'Religious Knowledge,' in *A Third Collection* 130.



culturally conditioned as it is, is a function of an unauthentic or an authentic tradition? And the answer can be discovered only by the release of the original meaningfulness by which we submit our beliefs and convictions to an immanent critique, in order to ascertain their genuineness. The answer is found in the self-transcendence that is the criterion of authenticity or genuineness, a self-transcendence that in the stage of cultural development that is advanced by a Lonergan, can be submitted to self-appropriation. Once again, Heidegger is speaking mainly about the ordinary meaningfulness that constitutes present horizons, and Lonergan about the original meaningfulness that submits ordinary meaningfulness to critique and, probably, to transformation: to 'healing and creating.' The operations that constitute original meaningfulness, then, alone are able to pass judgment on the truth of the ordinary meaningfulness of present horizons. The immanently generated affirmation that emanates from the grasp of the virtually unconditioned is alone capable of ascertaining the truth of the unconcealedness of the mediated immediacy with which the process toward original meaningfulness begins. Heidegger's unconcealedness alone will not do, nor will von Balthasar's *Wahrnehmen*. Both must be confirmed by some sort of process that leads either to immanently generated knowledge or to the reflective understanding that grasps as virtually unconditioned the value of deciding to believe. If they cannot be so confirmed, they must be subjected to the process of transformation that is best succinctly summed up in the wonderful expression 'healing and creating in history.' The 'minor formal or actual intelligibility' of mediated immediacy must either be confirmed or corrected by the 'major formal or actual intelligibility' attained by the operations that Lonergan has clarified. It is not the case, in the last analysis, that the truth of judgment is merely a derivative of a primal unconcealedness. It is rather the case that the truth of the primal unconcealedness of mediated immediacy is a function of the major authenticity of the cultural and religious traditions that have bequeathed us this heritage. If that is lacking, then our responsibility is to correct the major unauthenticity of the received tradition; and



the only way we can do that is by exercising the original meaningfulness that, under God's gift of grace, is the sole source and guarantee of such healing and creating in history.

Still, this does not mean that Heidegger is entirely mistaken in his notion of truth as unconcealedness, nor that his appeal to overcome the forgetfulness of what he calls Being is itself on entirely the wrong track. What he is all about, if I have been interpreting him correctly, or at least if I may put the best possible interpretation on his words, is intimately related to the healing and creating in history that Lonergan is promoting: healing the forgetfulness of an already given, temporally and historically conditioned facticity that is mediated by meaning, as a starting point for the exercise of the operations by which original meaningfulness creates. What his notion of truth as unconcealment is about is what Lonergan's first transcendental precept, Be attentive, is urging. Insights are only as good as the images in which they grasp intelligibility. Forgetfulness of the images reduces and in the limit eliminates the probability that we will have the insights we need, not only to get on with our individual lives, but also to fulfil our historical responsibilities. Insight into image is infallible, but if the images are distorted, so too will be the insights. And until the forgetfulness of the data is overcome, the marshaling of the evidence for a reasonable judgment will be lacking essential components. This is what psychic conversion is all about. Whether it is defined from 'below,' as it were, as the transformation of the censorship over neural demands from a repressive to a constructive functioning, or explained from 'above' in language that appeals to a healing of what Heidegger calls the forgetfulness of Being, it is a transformation that effects a renewed link between the creative, inquiring human spirit and the materials, the elemental meaning, the mediated immediacy that at any given time constitute the starting point of the creative process.

