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AN UNDER-TOW IN RETROSPECT:
A PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE
IN THE THOUGHT OF BERNARD LONERGAN

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CHAPTER 1

THE TROUBLE WITH RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

If one takes seriously the critique of onto-theology originating in Kant and amplified by Heidegger, then theologically significant religious experience becomes a problem.¹ The so-called “theological turn” in phenomenology (initiated by Levinas and Derrida, explicitly developed by Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry and Paul Ricoeur, and then industrialized into English by John D. Caputo, Merold Westphal, and others) has been dogged by more orthodox Husserlian questions about method and evidence. Has not the attention to the Absolute, the Origin, or the “Foundation” been a precisely un-phenomenological forgetting of the reduction and eidetic intuition?² Moreover, if one accepts these Janicaud-ian concerns along with the critique of onto-theology, it seems that theologically significant religious experience can find no corner of the phenomenal horizon to mine in support of its conclusions. Beings do not let us rationalistically extrapolate to Being, lest we forget the ontological difference. What is worse, any “excess” that seems to be given must just be the effusions of anti-Kantian enthusiasm. From whence, for phenomenological philosophy of religion, comes the data?

Though the Canadian philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, SJ died in 1984, before many of the major texts of the “theological turn” emerged in English, his second major work, *Method in Theology*, contains what could be valuable resources for Continental Philosophy of Religion.³ It is the position of this study that Lonergan defines with precision where and how to identify the data relevant to the philosophy of religious experience. Moreover, his philosophy of religious experience suggests multi-

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd Revised Edition, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003), 498.; Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969).

² Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology and The "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, trans. Bernard G. Prusak (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000). See especially Janicaud’s essay in Part I summarizing (and articulating his criticism of) the “theological turn”.

³ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), xi-xii. Referred to hereafter as *Method*.

faceted applicability in other theological, philosophical, and religious studies.⁴ However, the fruits of Lonergan's phenomenological efforts are presented boiled down and in an understated style that no doubt seems foreign to the ambitiously descriptive modes of expression characteristic of French phenomenology. Also, Lonergan's works are a challenging amalgam of phenomenology, metaphysical analysis, and transcendental argumentation. These latter two strands of thinking especially have fallen into serious disrepute in the Continental tradition. It seems that, as a result, Lonergan's *Method in Theology* has been little found at the table with Continental Philosophy of Religion.

Those familiar with Lonergan's work might be just as surprised as the theologically minded phenomenologists by the applicability suggested above. After all, *Method in Theology* is foremost a vehicle for communicating Lonergan's model of collaborative theological research. He called this model "functional specialization" to distinguish it from "field" and "subject" specialization.⁵ Whereas field specialization proceeds by "dividing and subdividing the field of data" under investigation for the sake of making discoveries, and subject specialization proceeds by "classifying the results of investigations" for the sake of communicating those discoveries made, functional specialization proceeds methodically "from data to results."⁶ The eight functional specializations (Research, Interpretation, History, Dialectic, Foundations, Doctrines, Systematics, and Communications) are "successive parts of one and the same process," such that "earlier parts are incomplete without the later," and the later "presuppose the earlier and complement them." "In brief," Lonergan writes in Chapter Five of *Method in Theology*, "functional specialties are functionally interdependent." This "functional interdependence" allows for theological method to yield "cumulative and progressive results" through the collaborative recurrence and proper

⁴ For a thorough study of the development of Lonergan's thought in relationship to religious studies, see Jim Kanaris, *Bernard Lonergan's Philosophy of Religion: From Philosoph of God to Philosophy of Religious Studies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002).

⁵ *Method*, 125-126.

⁶ *Ibid.*

relation of the specializations and their respective results.⁷ Such fruitful collaboration Lonergan saw as the product of an adequately “contemporary theology” that would be equal to the level of the times. Development and facilitation of contemporary, collaborative theological method was and is the central aspiration of *Method in Theology*.

Lonergan did not present his theological method, however, as “a set of rules to be followed meticulously by a dolt.”⁸ That sort of method “is possible when the same result is produced over and over,”⁹ and does not yield that sort of cumulative and progressive results that make the natural sciences such a stunningly productive enterprise. Nor did he present functional specialization as a mere model to be used descriptively, or a mere tool to be employed pragmatically, though it is certainly no less than these.¹⁰ Rather, Lonergan floats his theological method at anchor, attached to a theory of the invariant but dynamic structure in human cognitional and moral being. The first four chapters of *Method in Theology* provide accounts of both the conscious structure Lonergan had found in himself (and that any reader is invited to discover in his or her own conscious self) and the related features of human living and meaning relevant to theological inquiry. Chapters One through Four (*Method*, *The Human Good*, *Meaning*, and *Religion*, respectively) set the scene in which the dynamically structured dance of functional specialization must be performed and from which it will draw the resources for its products. Functional specialization divorced from this context might be only a useful model or tool to be taken up at one’s convenience. If, however, Lonergan is correct in his characterization of this context, and most essentially in identifying conscious realities that undergird that context, then his method might be something considerably more than a model or a tool. It might be the future of scholarship in the humanities, and in theology especially.

⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁸ Ibid., xi.

⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., xii.

Where, in all of this, does Lonergan turn to the philosophy of religious experience? The third subsection of Chapter Four in *Method in Theology* is titled “Religious Experience” and it is only two pages long.¹¹ It begins as follows:

Being in love with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion. All love is self-surrender, but being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations. Just as unrestricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfillment of that capacity.¹²

Surprisingly, nowhere in the body of Section 4.3 of *Method in Theology* does Lonergan employ the phrase “religious experience.” He does speak of “being in love with God, as experienced(.)” That is as close as he gets to the subsection’s titular phrase. In the two pages that follow, Lonergan spends two short paragraphs explaining and describing “fulfillment.”¹³ The following paragraph distinguishes conscious *experience* of “being in love with God” as what he calls a “dynamic state” from the *knowledge* born of being in love with God. The paragraph after that distinguishes the quality of responsible, moral consciousness that differentiates “being in love” from other qualities of consciousness.¹⁴ The last two paragraphs of the subsection connect Lonergan’s broadly Judeo-Christian formulation, “being in love with God,” to his more explicitly Catholic theological categories of Sanctifying and Cooperative Grace.¹⁵ Lonergan does go on to discuss “Expressions of Religious Experience,” the dialectical development of those expressions, and their media in following sections. Dispersed throughout *Method in Theology* are brief and illuminating references back to the formulations of this section, but those passages are dispersed through the text at odd intervals. In any case, these two

¹¹ Ibid., 106-107.

¹² Ibid., 106.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 106-107.

¹⁵ Ibid., 107.

terse and cryptic pages are what greet the scholar who, taking a casual interest in the philosophy of religious experience in Lonergan's theological methodology, has flipped to *Method's* table of contents for direction.

This is an unfortunate fact. Lonergan's philosophy of cognition, found most famously in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, offers marvelous precision, systematicity, and suggests many multi-disciplinary opportunities for development.¹⁶ Much of what is sometimes called Lonergan's "Latin Theology" has now been translated into English and exhibits similar rigor, precision, and systematic grounding in his philosophy of consciousness and cognition.¹⁷ It would be a shame to leave these two ungainly pages of *Method in Theology* as the foremost entry point for those who appreciate Lonergan's approach to philosophy or to theology and wonder about his view on the shared (if contested) middle-ground called religious experience. Though it was not to his purposes in *Method in Theology* to expound directly, systematically, and at length regarding religious experience, the casual reader ought not be left with the impression that there was no determinate notion of religious experience undergirding that concept's employment in *Method*. Nor should he or she be left with the impression that reconstituting that notion, for its own sake or to gain deeper access to *Method in Theology's* other assets, is a futile task.

This work is an attempt to express directly, systematically and at length the philosophy of religious experience presented briefly, sometimes allusively, or very often to other ends in *Method in*

¹⁶ Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). Cited hereafter as *Insight*; One example of such development is in theories of education, such as Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., "Old Things and New: A Strategy for Education," ed. Fred Lawrence, special issue, *Lonergan Workshop Journal* 5 (1985), or more recently in Catherine Blanche King, *Finding The Mind: Pedagogy for Verifying Cognitional Theory* (New York: University Press of America, 2011).

¹⁷ For examples of Lonergan's "Latin Theology," see Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Early Latin Theology*, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour, trans. Michael G. Shields, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 19 (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2011); Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *The Triune God: Systematics*, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour, trans. Michael G. Shields, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 12 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). Cited hereafter as *Systematics*.

Theology. I also hope this study will coalesce, organize, and communicate resources internal to Lonergan's larger *corpus* for understanding his philosophy of religious experience. Indeed, it may present some resources that, at first glance, do not seem applicable to the question of religious experience, and might thus be overlooked. It might also present resources that are too dispersed in Lonergan's *corpus* to be easily found by those whose interest in Lonergan may be only passing. Unfortunately, I have not reached the level of understanding and conception at which I could express Lonergan's thinking on religious experience in such a way that I spare my reader the considerable effort of tackling sets of terms with unfamiliar technical meanings and often complicated interrelations. Indeed, I suspect that no such expression exists because there is no worthwhile understanding of Lonergan on religious experience that is simple and easy. If that price of admission is too steep, then I fear my reader will have to settle for an understanding of religious experience that H. L. Mencken might describe as, "neat, plausible, and wrong."¹⁸

This first chapter has attempted to give some justification for a study of this length on Lonergan's philosophy of religious experience. Chapter 2 serves as an introduction to how Lonergan conceived "philosophy of" and leads the reader through an essay in which Lonergan applied that methodology to conceiving philosophy of religious experience. Chapter 2 ends with a defense of beginning with Experience and not with The Religious. The discussion of Experience found there is structured by Lonergan's conception of "philosophy of" as a set of basic terms and relations with a basic orientation. Chapter 3 covers Lonergan's theory of cognition. Chapter 4 moves from cognition generally into the philosophical task Lonergan called, "Self-Appropriation," in which the cognitional structure investigates an experience not given as of an object, but of the subject him or herself as investigating and experiencing. Moreover, Chapter 4 discusses the integral and primary role played by *action* in cognition, Self-Appropriation, and thereby Self-Constitution. Chapter 5 distinguishes between First and

¹⁸ H. L. Mencken, "The Divine Afflatus," *A Mencken Chrestomathy* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 443.

Second Order Religious Experiences, and the role that objectification plays in the latter. Finally, in Chapter 6, First Order Religious Experience is explored at length, in an attempt to crystallize Lonergan's philosophy of religious experience. The concluding Chapter 7 will return only ever so briefly to recount why I believe Lonergan's philosophy of religious experience could be a fruitful resource for the Continental Philosopher of Religion.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEIVING “PHILOSOPHY OF”

Understanding Lonergan’s philosophy of religious experience means understanding his philosophical methodology. In an early collection of Lonergan’s essays, bearing the understated title *Collection*, there is a brief paper, “Openness and Religious Experience,” that Lonergan provided *in absentia* for a congress at the Jesuit house of philosophy studies at Gallarate, Italy in 1960.¹⁹ To call it an essay would be an overstatement. Lonergan himself demurely refers to it as a set of perhaps suggestive headings.²⁰ It might accurately be described as an elaborated outline. If, in “Openness and Religious Experience,” Lonergan had directly taken up the question of religious experience, this study might be rather redundant. Lonergan had instead taken up the question, “How should I conceive *philosophy of religious experience*?”²¹ Indeed, the respect in which “Openness and Religious Experience” offers a philosophy of religious experience at all is only available to the reader diligent enough to think through the implications of Lonergan’s way of approaching a more abstract question. Even then, as Lonergan warns, the implications are merely suggestive.

How, then, *does* Lonergan proceed? What is his philosophical methodology for approaching religious experience? Lonergan tackles the formulation, “philosophy of religious experience,” by dividing it into a formal component (philosophy of) and a material component (...religious experience). A “philosophy of” determines, in some particular material component, (1) basic terms, (2) basic correlations, and (3) a basic orientation. He takes *Insight* as an example of a “philosophy of” in which

¹⁹ Bernard Lonergan, S.J., “Openness and Religious Experience,” *Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 185-187, 294-295. Cited hereafter as “Openness.”

²⁰ “Openness,” 185.

²¹ *Ibid.*

the material component is understanding.²² In *Insight*, the basic terms are empirical, intelligent, and rational consciousness and the basic correlations are the relationship of the empirical to the intellectual, and of the empirical and intellectual to the rational.²³ Lastly, in *Insight*, the basic orientation is what he calls the pure, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know. What Lonergan means by levels of consciousness, the manner in which they relate, and the unrestricted desire to know will be elucidated soon enough. For now, the above is merely an illustration of the formal component in which the Lonerganian “philosophy of” for philosophy of religious experience consists: basic terms, basic relations, and a basic orientation.

In “Openness and Religious Experience,” Lonergan next turns to discuss what he calls “Openness” by means of terms, correlations, and basic orientation. Lonergan does not explain why Openness is being introduced, even though the logic of the paper would imply a discourse on the material component (religious experience) next. In any case, Lonergan lists the next set of basic terms: (1) Openness as Fact, (2) Openness as Achievement, and (3) Openness as Gift. “Openness as a fact,” Lonergan writes, “is the pure desire to know.”²⁴ Thus, what in *Insight’s* philosophy of understanding is the basic orientation, is in this “philosophy of...” a basic term.²⁵ Openness as Fact is merely “a principle of possible achievement,” which is to say that it is a potency in need of, but also containing the normative criteria for, actualization. Lonergan employs the phenomenological metaphor of horizon to characterize such an actualization. Openness as Fact is “the ultimate horizon that is to be reached only

²² Ibid.

²³ Though a fourth term or “level of consciousness” will emerge later in Lonergan’s work and in this study, Lonergan was only operating in a “three level” context at the time “Openness” was written.

²⁴ Ibid., 186.

²⁵ This will be a clue to how what, at first glance in *Insight*, seems like an overt rationalism in Lonergan is revealed to be a pedagogically strategic emphasis on the intellectual. It is an emphasis, however, that is eventually located a larger context that sublates (without diminishing, dismissing, or denaturing) rationality.

through successive enlargements of the actual horizon.”²⁶ The scope of one’s actual horizon is the second basic term, Openness as Achievement. The “successive enlargements of the actual horizon” can follow from, to put it simply, the process of learning. In other words, the more I learn, the larger is my horizon. There is, however, another class of Openness that is “an ultimate enlargement, beyond the resources of every finite consciousness.” That is Openness as Gift.²⁷ It approximates the ultimate horizon normatively implied in Openness as Fact, which is to say that it is a horizon that approaches the unrestricted. Such are the basic terms of Lonergan’s philosophy of Openness, which is also (the reader is left to assume) a philosophy of religious experience in some unspecified respect.

What of the basic relations (next in a Lonerganian “philosophy of”) for Lonergan’s philosophy of openness/religious experience? Lonergan offers but a single sentence:

Openness as fact is for openness as gift; and openness as achievement arises from the fact, and conditions and, at the same time, is conditioned by the gift.²⁸

The first clause, that the Fact is for the Gift, suggests that the latter is to the former as fulfillment. “Fulfillment,” of course, is precisely the language Lonergan will use again in *Method in Theology* to explain the relation of religious experience to our capacity for self-transcendence.²⁹ An Openness beyond any finite achievement, then, is the proper *terminus* of Openness as Fact. In the second clause, the achievement, whether more or less adequate to the normative implications of Openness as Fact, nonetheless emerges because Openness is already at play in the workings of understanding by which the achievement is accomplished. Openness, in other words, is the source of self-transcendence and self-transcendence is our means of horizon expansion. The last clause, that Openness as Achievement “conditions and, at the same time, is conditioned by the gift,” is perhaps the most abstract but also the

²⁶ “Openness,” 186.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Method*, 106.

most suggestive. In some respect, the achieved Openness of finite consciousness reciprocally conditions Openness as Gift. If the Giver of Openness as Gift is, to put it vaguely at this point, transcendent and the Receiver of that gift also conditions the gift in some respect, then the finitude of Openness-achieving consciousness is a peculiar kind of finitude indeed.

An astute reader may now have some grasp of how these abstract terms relate and some inkling of their significance for religious experience. Ultimately, though, “Openness and Religious Experience” is little more than a heuristic scheme for how to develop a philosophy of religious experience. “Openness and Religious Experience” thus serves as, not an answer to the question of religious experience, but a frame for the overall problem of understanding Lonergan’s philosophy of religious experience. It is, however, *only* a frame. Though “Openness” is highly systematic in its expression, the paper does not dissolve the difficulties inherent in *Method in Theology*’s account of religious experience. For example, *Method* makes use of Lonergan’s challengingly expanded application of the word “experience,” a notion which is not treated at all in “Openness.” What Lonergan means by “experience,” if not merely overlooked, confounds easy comprehension of Lonergan’s point, even while it subtly guides correct interpretation. What is more obviously challenging in *Method* are the descriptions of religious experience that include imagistic allusions and references to Christian scriptures. Such references are not wholly out of place in a book written primarily (but not exclusively) for Roman Catholic theologians,³⁰ but also are not entirely helpful for the philosopher of religion and complicate Lonergan’s own hopefulness that *Method* might provide tools for ecumenical and inter-religious encounters.³¹ I believe these complicating factors are further justification for a study of this length on the subject.

³⁰ *Method*, xii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

As is sometimes the case in Lonergan's writings, he employs his pedagogical strategy on the reader and explains that strategy only after the fact, if he does so at all. In this case, to say that Lonergan explains his strategy for turning to Openness, when the material component is ostensibly religious experience, is a bit generous. However, he drops a heavy hint at the end of this brief sketch of the philosophy of religious experience. The very last sentence reads as follows:

Because these three (openness as fact, achievement, and gift) are linked in the historical unfolding of the human spirit, they reveal how religious experience holds a fundamental place primarily in man's making of man but no less in the reflection on that making that is philosophy or, indeed, 'philosophy of(.)'³²

Since the basic terms of this philosophy of Openness are all aspects of the basic orientation identified in Lonergan's philosophy of understanding (the pure, unrestricted desire to know), it can be inferred that the basic orientation for the philosophy of religious experience (which Lonergan does not explicitly name) is Openness, the pure, unrestricted desire to know. The gift that fulfills the fact of our Openness, but also the being fulfilled are constitutive components of religious experience. Religious experience, whatever it is, is thereby integral to the fulfillment of human understanding specifically, but also to human being generally.

Understanding Lonergan's Philosophy of Religious Experience

This is, obviously, a rather unusual conception of religious experience. The respect in which it is experiential, in any familiar sense of that word, is outright obscure, and the respect in which it pertains to religion is only slightly less so. Furthermore, the unusualness contributes to the difficulty with Lonergan's account at even this early stage. No doubt what few insights the abstractness of "Openness and Religious Experience" may have occasioned are dwarfed by the litany of questions it raises. Some of these questions are for comprehension, as in "what does Lonergan mean?" Other questions are for

³² "Openness," 187.

more difficult matters of verification, as in “whatever he means, is he right?” I hope the reader will experience viscerally the encounter with a perplexing subject and the slow achievement of understanding it. In that experience of wonder and the dynamic process of apprehension, I hope the reader will also discover a clue to the startling strangeness of Lonergan’s approach to religious experience.

This study will utilize Lonergan’s method for conceiving “philosophy of...” to directly and systematically articulate his philosophy of religious experience. Much as Lonergan divides the philosophy of religious experience into two components, I will examine separately what Lonergan means by Experience and then what he means by the modifier Religious. I will begin with Experience and, in light of the frame for our inquiry, I will relate Experience to Openness. Ultimately, this will mean relating both Experience and Openness to the dynamic structure of cognition in which they are explained. In short, this means appealing to Lonergan’s Cognitional Theory in general to approach Experience and Openness specifically. In the second part, it will be necessary to understand in what respect Lonergan considered Openness and Experience related to The Religious. This will mean addressing Lonergan’s understanding of transcendence as the objective of our Openness and self-transcendence. Lastly, we will try to re-abstract religious experience from these two contexts in order to give a brief account of religious experience *as Experience*.

A Methodological Note

Why start with experience? Perhaps the central difficulty in adverting to what Lonergan calls religious experience is the “plain meaning” of religious experience. This difficulty is not unique to this inquiry. The Socrates of the Platonic dialogues is perpetually struggling to draw out a philosophic definition from the confusion of “plain meaning.” Why should philosophy of religious experience presume to be exempted from this difficulty? Common sense meanings, of course, are many and there

are at least as many plain meanings of religious experience as there are communities of religious tradition.³³ To set out on a properly theoretical approach to the nature of religious experience, one could always begin at the beginning, as it were, by asking, “What is The Religious?” One then sets about sifting through the myriad religious phenomena and the swiftly multiplying body of literature reflecting on religious phenomena. Perhaps, by surveying the world-historical religious scene, one could find some essence to religion, or at least a ‘family resemblance’ from which to specify and explain those experiences that qualify as religious. Thus, one would ask, “What makes some experience religious?”

Though the question, “What makes some experience *religious*?” implicitly includes the question, “What is The Religious?” it obscures (or at the very least, invites) a more basic question: “What is experience?” An inquiry into the meaning of the phrase religious experience that begins with The Religious assumes a genus, namely *experience*, some species of which can be called religious. Of course, there is nothing logically preventing an inquirer from attacking each term separately (as I am doing here) *and* beginning with either term indifferently. Even the protracted struggle to define religion (or the post-modern refusal to do so), discouraging though it may be, does not invalidate this. In principle, one could define The Religious, then define experience, and lastly work out whatever complications emerge as a result of modifying the latter by the former.

However, inquiry is first a largely pre-logical affair.³⁴ The inquirer always encounters a question in some historical and existential location. Antecedent beliefs, explicit or otherwise, about what

³³ “There are as many brands of common sense as there are languages, social or cultural differences, almost differences of place and time.” *Method*, 276.

³⁴ By “pre-logical,” I do not mean the affective in general or Heideggerian “mood,” as opposed to the logical, the conceptual, and/or the cognitive as one finds in some Continental Philosophy of Religion. See James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). Rather, I mean the intelligence characteristic of what C.S. Peirce called “argument” that is not yet the formal constructions of “argumentation.” An inquirer is located historically in (as Peirce calls it) the community of inquirers, with habits of belief (from which concepts derive their meaning) that condition the emergence of doubt but are conditioned by the process of assuaging doubt through inquiry and the “fixing” of new habits of belief. See Charles S. Peirce, “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God,” *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). There would also be a para-logical intelligence that we might call wisdom. Wisdom arranges questions and answers in orders appropriate to diverse exigencies,

experience is, or about what counts as experience, can preclude possibly relevant hypotheses about The Religious. Beginning with The Religious does not necessarily preclude some set of hypotheses, but it increases the likelihood that one might preclude some *de facto*. What is worse, an inquirer might be given little cause to survey the field of possibly relevant answers for those arbitrarily excluded from consideration *a priori* (aside from a vague, nagging sense of general doubt that is so total as to be rarified). If, however, the terms were horizontally related, such that “religious” were added to “experience” the way that two apples are added to two apples to make four apples, this concern would be evenly distributed. That is to say, beginning with either term would carry the danger that a plain meaning for one could foreclose possibly fruitful avenues of consideration for the other. Thus, one would have to proceed dialectically, thus reciprocally correcting each understanding until something like a provisionally adequate account of each term was at work in the coupling of “religious” to “experience” in the given philosophy of religious experience.

In this case, however, because The Religious is predicated of a particular species of experience, they are related vertically. Thus, what is true of experience in general would be true also of religious experience *as* experience. The inverse need not be the case. What is true of The Religious in general would not also be true of every experience. To develop an understanding of The Religious and then carry it into an inadequately illuminated field of experiences means that one might never find the phenomenon to which the “religious” label properly applies. An inquirer might attempt to apply the label to an ill-fitting phenomenon, thus producing all kinds of unnecessary problems in need of solving. One might also conclude that religious experience was an illusory notion from the beginning. If, instead (and as I am resolving to do in this study), one pursues an adequate understanding of experience *first*, such that the field of possibly relevant phenomena is not just illuminated, but also more thoroughly

such as anticipated new discoveries or the explanation to students of those discoveries now well worn. I am attempting to exercise such wisdom in arguing for beginning from experience as a topic of inquiry.

surveyed, described, and categorized, then one may return with the “religious” label having reduced the likelihood that applicable phenomena have been overlooked.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIENCE AND OTHER ABSTRACTIONS

In “Openness and Religious Experience,” Lonergan made explicit his philosophical methodology. He set out to identify basic terms and relations, and then the basic orientation by which they are actualized. This method will have to be borne in mind along the way. Lonergan explains Experience as a term in a nexus of relations that has a basic orientation. Any effort to explain Lonergan’s meaning will require addressing the set of terms to which Experience is functionally related and in virtue of which it is implicitly defined. Such explanations are overtly abstract, which is to say that they attempt to analytically identify the relational unity and identity immanent to some phenomena.³⁵ Much like one ought not try to explain what a liver is without making reference to the metabolic system of which it is a part, I must explain Experience by reference to the structure of which it is a part. In other words, this section will endeavor to indicate the terms and relations constitutive of the whole (Knowing, properly speaking) of which Lonergan’s notion of Experience is a part.

A Formally Dynamic Structure

Knowing, on Lonergan’s account, is not best understood as a simple power or faculty, such as “the Understanding,” actualized in a single act. It is not, in this respect, very much like taking a good look at what there is to be seen.³⁶ Rather, in another essay from *Collection*, “Cognitional Structure,”

³⁵ Of course, there is often a residue of unexplained data when one employs Lonerganian “philosophy of” as a method. Other methods are needed to address that residue and bring out other intelligible features of the phenomena. Each of these methods of understanding *could* individually be understood as a “reductionism,” but I think they might be more generously described collectively as the intelligently polymorphous enrichment of experience through abstraction and synthesis. For Lonergan’s comments on the notion of abstraction, see *Insight*, 111-117.

³⁶ In fact, neither seeing specifically nor perception in general are very much like the plain meaning of “taking a good look.”

Knowing is called a “formally dynamic structure.”³⁷ First published in a special issue of *Continuum* called *Spirit as Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*, Lonergan wrote “Cognitive Structure” because, by his own admission, his contemporaries had found his cognitive theory rather obscure. “Cognitive Theory” was, accordingly, written with conceptual clarity in mind.³⁸ “Cognitive Structure” eschews the strategy of appealing to the reader’s experiences of paying attention, coming to possible understandings and passing judgment on the truth, falsehood, or probability of ideas. Such experiences are precisely the sort of thing Lonergan desires his reader pay attention to, understand, and affirm in him or herself. However, when one uses words like experience, understanding, or judgment, plain meanings or conflicting technical meanings can obscure what is meant in Lonergan’s philosophy of cognition. As a result, grasping the relations between the terms first, as though the words “experience” or “judgment” are algebraic Xs and Ys, may be a more fruitful task. Thus, “Cognitive Structure” begins not from the basic terms of Lonergan’s *Insight*, but from its basic relations. For our purposes, “Cognitive Structure” offers a concise articulation of Lonergan’s cognitive theory as a “philosophy of,” such that we can begin to understand the part that Experience plays in the Formally Dynamic Structure of Lonergan’s cognitive theory.

As noted above, Knowing is a Formally Dynamic Structure. What does Lonergan mean by this dense and technical formulation? By Structure he means a whole. Wholes, of course, have parts. Sometimes wholes are only aggregates of their parts, as a whole lawn is an aggregate of blades of grass. A lawn, no matter how luxurious, is not a Structure. Lonergan gives the example of a gallon of milk, in which the relation between whole and parts is an “arbitrary jumble of arithmetic ratios.”³⁹ If, however,

³⁷ Bernard Lonergan, S.J., “Cognitive Structure,” *Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 205-221. Cited hereafter as “Cognitive Structure.”

³⁸ “Cognitive Structure,” 205.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

the parts have their identity because of the function they serve in the whole, then the whole is a *Structure*. A stone arch, for example, is an architectural Structure in structure's common and technical meaning alike. It ought to be noted that Structural parts need not resemble one another so long as they serve their function relative to the whole. Some Structures are static, like the arch, but others are *Dynamic*, like a dance, in which the parts are activities. These latter structures are Dynamic Structures. What does it mean, though, that knowing is a *Formally* Dynamic Structure? In Formally Dynamic Structures, the active parts cumulatively assemble the whole, such that the whole is effectively *self-assembling*. The dynamic parts have their identity in light of the whole, but also determine, condition, and enact the reality of the whole. Knowing, properly speaking, is the fulfillment of just such a self-assembling Structure of activities.

Experience, then, is defined implicitly as a constitutive part of the Formally Dynamic Structure that Lonergan takes to be, properly speaking, Knowing. Experience is that set of activities that provide data on which the activities of intelligence may act in order to Understand. The functional definition of Experience may seem strange and remote from what, in its common meaning, we call experience. However, perhaps I can offer a more obviously concrete analogy. Knowledge is the product of a dynamic structure of activities called "Knowing", much like cookies are the product of a dynamic structure of activities called "baking". As baking consists of measuring, mixing, cooking, and cooling, also Knowing consists of Experiencing, inquiring, Understanding, and Judging. Not only do I need all the activities to achieve my objective (whether cookies or knowledge), they must also be related to one another in the proper order. If I do not have ingredients, I am not ready to measure, and if I have yet to measure them, I am not ready to mix them, and obviously putting unmixed ingredients, no matter how carefully measured, into the oven will not render cookies. Similarly, questions are about the data provided by one's Experience, and Understandings are answers to those question. Judgments are about the (probable) correctness of one's Understandings. Thus, the objects also have their identity because of

the functional role they play in the whole, as do the activities by which they are incorporated into the Formally Dynamic Structure. We will return to this relationship between objects and activities in what follows.

Self-Transcending Intentional Operations (STIOs)

The above analogy to baking brings to light a further element that is not made explicit in speaking of Experience as an active part in a Formally Dynamic Structure. All of the activities grouped under the headings of Experience, Understanding, and Judgment are transitive and intentional. “They are transitive,” Lonergan writes in *Method in Theology*, “not merely in the grammatical sense that they are denoted by transitive verbs but also in the psychological sense that by the operation one becomes aware of the object. This psychological sense is what is meant by the verb intend(.)”⁴⁰ Thus, cognitional activities act on objects and, moreover, by that acting “one becomes aware of the object.” In short, the activities that make up the Formally Dynamic Structure of Knowing are Self-Transcending Intentional Operations (S-TIOs). The following will first examine why Lonergan specifically calls cognitional activities *Operations*. Second, those Operations will be considered as Intentional, and thus examined in relation to their Objects. Third, Operations and their Objects will be considered as related to an Operator, and thereby three senses of Self-Transcending will be differentiated.

Activities and Operations

Up until now I have been using “activity” to refer to what, in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan calls Operations.⁴¹ In its technical meaning, Operation is, like Experience, one in a set of terms defined by basic relations. The basic terms are Operation, Object, and Operator. As noted above, each of the

⁴⁰ *Method*, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Operations is transitive, which is to say it has an Object, and intentional, which is to say that it has a conscious Operator that is made aware of the Object by the Operation.

The roots of thinking of Operation as a theoretical term lie in what Lonergan identifies as Aristotle's distinction between *energeia* (Operation) and *kinesis* (Movement), where Operations are acts in which the action and its end are coincident. Movement, by contrast, is that activity in which the incomplete is moved to completion.⁴² If I have walked halfway home and I proceed to walk the rest of the way, there will have been a movement, in time, from the incomplete to the complete. Though it approaches an over-simplification, I might say that what was, at one time, only an indeterminate "walk," becomes, at a later time, a determinate "walk home." By contrast, once Operations are brought to act, they do not become in time, but endure through time. Seeing, for example, does not complete sight, which is already fully itself as a potency. Rather, "the object of perception makes that which can perceive actively so instead of potentially so(.)"⁴³ Thus, the action of seeing can be and is coincident with having seen, unlike walking home and having walked home, which cannot be coincident. Though I will later (re)emphasize the respect in which cognition is constituted by activities and can be considered as actions, it is important to note that cognitional activities are of a distinct Operational kind from those characterized by Movement.

In addition to being considered in terms of the character of the action, Operations can also be considered as parts of a whole, much as Lonergan had done in the "Cognitional Structure" essay. This whole, however, can be considered much less abstractly than in "Cognitional Structure." Indeed, it can be understood as emerging from and with other modes of embodied engagement by the human being with its environment. The second chapter of *Method in Theology*, on the human good, begins by

⁴² Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 111. Cited hereafter as *Verbum*.

⁴³ De Anima III.7, 431a, 407 (Aristotle, *De Anima: Books II & III*, trans. D. W. Hamlyn [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993], 63).

recounting Jean Piaget's analysis of skills into operations and the situation and/or object that occasioned them.⁴⁴ The skill of grabbing (to use an example from Piaget that Lonergan takes up in detail in the *Topics in Education* lectures) is an adaptation of a set of physiological motor operations in order to act in a diverse set of situations on a diverse set of objects, so long as the objects are proportionate to the skill of grabbing and the material elements that condition it, i.e. the size and strength of the child's hand.⁴⁵ This involves not just the coordinated bending of the fingers, but also kinesthetic operations such as visual focal selection or coordination of the child's limbs, that are both physiological and conscious. An infant thereby coordinates the diverse physiological and conscious operations to spatially locate an object and put his or her hand to the object grabbed. Similarly, seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting, and feeling are all materially composed of similar kinesthetic coordination.

What is a Skill (such as grabbing) on one level (and in relation to a proportionate set of objects) may prove to be a mere Operation to be related into a yet higher Skill as one shifts viewpoints. Thus, the psycho-sensitive Skill of seeing or hearing deftly, including the kinesthetic Operations sublated therein, can be Operations in a higher Skill set, namely Experiencing as itself a part of the Formally Dynamic Structure of Knowing.⁴⁶ It is important at this stage to note three things about Operations. First, Operations in the sense used in *Method* are differentiated by objects that both occasion the Operation and are acted upon by the Operation. Second, note that Operations which have coalesced into a Skill set that has general applicability (as a baby may grab a ball or a finger and I may Experience a painting or a

⁴⁴ *Method*, 27.

⁴⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 196-200. Cited hereafter as *Topics*.

⁴⁶ I was unable to find a passage in Lonergan that quite makes explicit this relationship between skill sets and structured cognitional operating, but I believe is rather soundly implied by the text in both *Method in Theology* and the application of Piaget's research to learning in general found in *Topics in Education*. Nonetheless, it ought to be noted that connecting the two as I have done may be an unorthodox manner of speaking about Lonergan's cognitional theory. It has the advantage, in this context, of prefiguring some of the claims I will make in the proceeding pages about knowing as a kind of doing.

symphony) can itself become sublated as an Operation into a higher set. In other words, because Operations are differentiated by Objects, their identity can shift with one's viewpoint. Lastly, and in anticipation of the next subsection on Objects, recall that this transitive-ness of Operations is connected to the active completeness in the Aristotelian distinction of Operations from activities more generally.

The Objects of Operations

In *Insight*, Operations are first introduced in an illustration of what it means to shift from lower to higher viewpoints. Such viewpoints are “higher” insofar as they follow successively upon one another, but also sublimate or integrate the previous into themselves. The above example from Piaget described this physiologically, whereas *Insight* treats of this kind of sublation in terms of mathematics. Lonergan cites how one moves from an arithmetic to an algebraic viewpoint. One may begin in math, as most of us did, by considering positive integers as multiple instances of “one” (e.g. $3 = 1+1+1$). The “one” “may be anything one pleases, from sheep to instances of the act of counting or ordering.”⁴⁷ Numbers are a quantity of spatially or temporally discrete objects on this arithmetic view. Of course, as soon as I consider such numbers to be anything so sophisticated as “positive integers,” I am well on my way out of the simple arithmetic viewpoint. If I think of the positive integers as the ability to always “add just one more,” I have grasped two peculiar ideas. First, I have understood that the positive integers are an infinite series. Second, I have quietly grasped the idea behind algebra, namely that numbers are implicitly defined by Operations such as addition, so that, as Lonergan writes in *Insight*, “the result of any operation will be a number and any number can be the result of an operation.”⁴⁸ Numbers, then, are no longer just objects in the plain (spatio-temporal) meaning of the term, but Objects as implicitly

⁴⁷ *Insight*, 38-39.

⁴⁸ *Insight*, 41-42.

defined and differentiated by Operations. So, we see that the power to differentiate and define is reciprocal between Operations and Objects.⁴⁹

Obviously, as one shifts one's viewpoint, from the arithmetic to the algebraic in this case, the meaning of Object changes. So too the meaning of Object in the cognitional context can change as the viewpoint shifts. If we ask about what occasions the Operation, or "moves us to the operation," to use an older vocabulary, we might think of the Object of an Operation in one sense (Object₁). We might also think of the Object of the Operation in terms of that which is "internally produced" by the Operations (Object₂).⁵⁰ Thus, for example, I might put sodium chloride onto my tongue, and so occasion Tasting as an Operation. Table salt will have been the Object₁ of the Operation called "tasting," but a flavor called "saltiness" will have been the Object₂ of that Operation as well. Insofar as I, along with Lonergan, am concerned with cognitional Operations here, in most cases the word "Object" will mean Object₂ unless I include subscript numbers to indicate otherwise.

Intentional Operations and Objects

The foregoing treatment of Operations and Objects has continued the basic terms/basic relations methodology set out in "Openness and Religious Experience." That treatment has been in service of explaining what it means that the cognitional activities in the Cognitional Structure are Self-Transcending Intentional Operations. The respect in which Operations and Objects are reciprocally defining and differentiating has been covered in the above. There, I distinguished Objects₁ and Objects₂, or what we might call "external" and "internal" Objects. To what, though, are Objects₂ internal? The

⁴⁹ According to Lonergan, this kind of reciprocal relationship is akin to Husserl's intentionality analysis in which act and object are correlative. (Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe [New York: Paulist Press, 1985], 145, ft. 8.)

⁵⁰ For how Lonergan identifies three senses of "object" as correlated to Operations, see *Systematics*, 13.

following will add to the dyadic relations of Operations and Objects a third basic term: Operators. An account of Operators is needed to explain how it is that cognitional Operations are Intentional.

In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan writes, “To say that the operations intend objects is to refer to such facts as that by seeing there becomes present what is seen, ...by imagining there becomes present what is imagined, and so on, where in each case, the presence in question is a psychological event.”⁵¹ To put it most abstractly, in addition to Objects, Operations also have Operators, where Operators are the agents of Operations. This means that the Operations are not merely the product of an unconscious encounter between objects. Just as grabbing a ball is not adequately understood only in terms of skilled hands and a proximate ball, but also of a *grabber* moving skilled hands to the present ball, so too the Operations that make up Experience are not just a matter of a visible or audible thing present to a properly functioning ocular or auditory organ, but also a looker or listener directing attention from one object to another.

Additionally, Cognitional Operations are Intentional Operations, which means that by the Operation(s), the Object is made present to a *conscious* Operator. Lonergan names this conscious Operator the Subject.⁵² In this formulation, however, the term “conscious” will only be as unambiguous as the term “present.” To speak of presence, of course, is ambiguous. Lonergan, in the Halifax lectures published as *Understanding and Being*, identifies three possible meanings. The first is to speak of something being present in a time and place: “the chairs are present in the room,” to use his example.⁵³ Something might also be “present to,” as the ball is present to (or absent from) the grab of the infant much as the chairs are present to (or absent from) my gaze. Such presence is a condition of an object

⁵¹ *Method*, 7.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on Insight*, ed. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* 5 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), 131-132. Cited hereafter as *Understanding*.

acting as an Object₂ for an Operation. Lastly, Lonergan identifies the third sense of presence, in which I must be present to myself in order for anything to be present to me.⁵⁴ This third sense of presence may seem like a mere doubling of the second sense of presence, but it is in fact qualitatively different. It is better illustrated by the difference between being awake and being in a dreamless sleep than it is by some kind of self-look at an internal stage or mirror. The difference between the former and latter illustrations is the difference between the Subject as Subject and the Subject as Object.

To return now to the Operator/Operation/Object triad, I might offer another abstract formulation: the conscious Operator makes Objects present to itself as Subject by means of Intentional Operations. This is what it means to say that the Operation is Intentional. The Operator is made also present to itself as Subject by Operating. Lonergan writes, “Just as operations by their intentionality make objects present to the subject, so also by consciousness they make the operating subject present to himself.”⁵⁵ This presence of the Subject to itself, not as an Object of an Operation, but as the Operating Subject of an Operation, is what we might call Intentional consciousness. Furthermore, just as Operations are differentiated in relation to their Objects, so too the quality of the consciousness of the Operator is differentiated by the Operation/Object correlation. Lonergan writes, “the quality of consciousness changes as the subject performs different operations.”⁵⁶ Thus, Intentional consciousness can be differentiated into empirical consciousness (in which one is merely paying attention), intellectual consciousness (in which one is endeavoring, and possibly succeeding, to understand), and rational consciousness (in which one is reflecting on the correctness of one’s understanding).

⁵⁴ *Understanding*, 132.

⁵⁵ *Method*, 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Operational Self-Transcendence

I believe that Lonergan means by Experience the simultaneous co-occurrence of these two kinds of presence: presence-to and presence-to-self. Neither kind of presence, however, is just a brute confrontation. Indeed, the mediation of meaning allows for human beings to transcend the world of the infant in which Object₁ must be immediately, spatio-temporally present in order to be present-to the Operations of consciousness, and thus enter a world mediated by meaning, in which the Object₁ may be spatio-temporally absent and still become an Object₂ of conscious Operation.⁵⁷ This liberation from the immediate world of bodily sense illustrates a respect in which cognitional activities are not just Intentional Operations, but Self-Transcending Intentional Operations (STIOs). They are Self-Transcending in several senses and the following is an effort to differentiate between these senses and highlight those that are particularly relevant for understanding Experience generally and Religious Experience specifically.

First, STIOs are self-transcending in the sense of being an engagement with what is other than the operating Subject. Whether it is the infant selecting a ball out from the visual field of the nursery or a critic imaginatively remembering a new painting that hangs on the wall in an art gallery that is 3,000 miles away, STIOs are a means of engaging Object₁ in which we have some interest.⁵⁸ Such conscious engagement may be for the sake of physiological engagement, as with the infant and the ball, or for the sake of another kind of conscious engagement, as the art critic imagining the painting for the sake of understanding the meaning(s) of the artist who made it. In this sense, one finds conscious Operations as a set of Operations (Experiencing, Understanding, etc.) and sets of sets coalesced into a Skill (Knowing) among others for navigating the proximate environment (and the universe in general) as an organism emerging from and caught up in the unfolding of that environment specifically and the universe

⁵⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁸ For Lonergan's discussion of *Sorge* (Care/Concern) in determining one's *Welt* (World) in Heidegger, see *Understanding*, 182-193.

generally. In this way, STIOs are not just intra-mental or intra-conscious phenomena for an immanent, solipsistic subjectivity. Even the subtle and often spontaneous focal selections that pertain to paying attention (which distinguish the concrete activity of perception from the abstract notion of “pure sensation”) are a self-transcending engagement with things.

Second, STIOs are Self-Transcending in regard to their own Operation/Object correlation. In other words, STIOs transcend themselves. The relationship between the Operations of Experience and the Objects of Experience is relative to their functional relationship in providing data for inquiry and the Operations of Understanding, by which the Objects of Understanding are “grasped.” Both the Operation and Object will be carried up and re-contextualized in “higher” levels of conscious Operation, such as Understanding and Judgment. In setting the conditions and providing the content for this sublation of the “lower” into the “higher,” STIO’s are Self-Transcending with regard, not just to the Operator, but to themselves as Operations. Thus, there is an ascending *élan* through the levels of consciousness distinguished by the different Operations and correlative Objects. In this sense, each Operation/Object correlation is Self-Transcending.

Third, STIOs are Self-Transcending in a manner that combines, unifies, transcends the first two sense of Self-Transcending. Objects₁ are mediated to the subject as Objects₂, and those internal Objects are carried up through the levels of Operations to the level of Judgment. If I authentically Judge an insight into the data presented by Experience to be correct, then I affirm the identity of Object₁ and Object₂ in a being. In so doing, I have grasped the real independence of that Object from my conscious Operations.⁵⁹ Also, I have, by conscious Operations, grasped something that is independent of me as an Operator. Thus, I may say that I have transcended myself by my cognitional Operations. Thus we may

⁵⁹ This is obviously not an adequately persuasive account of Lonergan’s understanding of correct judgment and its relationship to the real. There is inadequate space here to argue for Lonergan’s sophisticated views on judgment, but it is adequate for the purposes of understanding self-transcendence in this sense to note that Lonergan is convinced that true judgments apprehend the real, and the real is objective.

say that by Formally Dynamic Structure of STIOs, the consciously Operating Subject may transcend the mediations of consciousness *in* consciousness. Those STIO are thereby Self-Transcending in this third sense.

Consciousness and Two Kinds of Data

To review, in this chapter I have introduced Lonergan's conception of Knowing as a Formally Dynamic Structure of Self-Transcending Intentional Operations. Experience, then, is one such STIO, and thus a Formally Dynamic part of the Structure of Knowing. I went on to explain Operations as the kind of activity that is reciprocally defined and differentiated by its Object. Moreover, Intentional Operations are the Operations by which a conscious Operator makes Objects₁ present to itself as Objects₂. Intentional Operations are also those Operations by which an Operator is made present to itself as the Subject of conscious Operations. The co-occurrence of these two qualitatively distinct presences is what Lonergan means most generally by Experience.

We have, then, the fruit of a laborious and technical exploration of Lonergan's thinking on Experience. Experience is always twofold: Experience of the Object of Operation and Experience/consciousness of the Subject Operating. To speak of *conscious* Experience is to utter a redundancy, because all experiencing presupposes consciousness as the presence of the Experiencing Subject to him or herself that is the precondition of the Operating. Thus, if I may (along with Lonergan) call the correlative content of the Operations of Experience "Data," then two kinds of Data can be distinguished. There is, as the Object of the Operations at the level of Experience, the Data of Sense. There is also, as the content of the Subject's presence to themselves as consciously Operating Subject, the Data of Consciousness. However, the two kinds of Data are distinguished abstractly. Concretely, the Data of Sense and the Data of Consciousness are always given together.

Why, though, is this two-fold content of Experience of any significance for the present study of Lonergan's philosophy of religious experience? If, at the beginning, I had only appealed to the familiar experience of "paying attention" to illustrate Lonergan's notion of Experience, I would not have been leading my reader too far off track. However, the plain meaning of experience would also not be sufficiently relativized to the concomitant experiential content I above called the Data of Consciousness. As a result, the explanation provided would be unlikely to forestall the assumption that the content of one's attention is of a single, probably quasi-perceptual, kind. But the presence of the Subject to him or herself as Subject is not perceptual. It is conscious. Moreover, it is given simultaneously with perceptual acts like seeing and quasi-perceptual acts like imagining. In short, it is very easy to miss because one does not advert to it by taking a look. This whole aspect of the experiential field, populated as it is with the Data of Consciousness, would unknowingly be excluded, and thus precluded as possibly relevant to *Religious Experience*. Indeed, for Lonergan, the content of Religious Experience is going to be, at least primarily, given in the Data of Consciousness. If one read's Lonergan without any inkling of the Data of Consciousness, then one will not be able to make sense of his philosophy of religious experience.

CHAPTER 4

SOMETHING YOU DO YOURSELF

In the previous chapter, Experience was considered in metaphysical terms, as a part of the whole called Knowing. The “precise but highly difficult concepts” in which Lonergan’s cognitional theory consists, however, are not adequate on their own to the task of coming to know Knowing or Experience.⁶⁰ They are like the formulae of geometry or physics, in need of illustration and concretizing in the experience of the student. In other words, those abstract formulations require not just comprehension, but also verification. Does this theoretical formulation explain the correlations found in some concrete data? Does it meet the empirical principle? However, the Data to which Lonergan appeals are the contents of the self-presence of the Operating Subject. Recall, though, that such Data are given, not as the Object of an Operation, but as the contents of a conscious Operator’s self-presence. At the level of Experience, the Subject is given as Subject, not as Object. Thus, if we are going to elevate our Experience of the Subject as Subject from the level of mere conscious givenness to the levels of Understanding and of Judgment in order to come to know our Knowing, the conscious Operations of the Subject will have to be *objectified*. That is, they will have to be made present in the mode proportionate to Operations, namely as Objects. This chapter explores this process of objectification and elevation that Lonergan called Self-Appropriation. It will articulate the cognitional culmination of that process in the Self-Affirmation of the Knower. Moreover, this chapter will push beyond the cognitional Self-Affirmation of the Subject as Knower to articulate the ongoing process of practical Self-Constitution of the Subject as a Doer that follows on the discovery of the self-as-Knower in Lonergan’s sense.

⁶⁰ *Insight*, 558.

Self-Appropriation

In “Cognitional Structure,” Lonergan writes, “Where knowing is a structure, knowing knowing must be a reduplication of the structure.”⁶¹ It follows from Lonergan’s conception of Knowing as a Formally Dynamic Structure of Self-Transcending Intentional Operations that consciousness is not self-knowledge, but mere self-experience. Moreover, “subjects are present as subjects, not by being attended to, but by attending.” Self-experience is not another Object given to the Experiential Operations, but the conscious condition of there being any Operations or Objects of cognition at all. So, we may say, whenever we are conscious, we are Experiencing our Experiencing, Understanding and/or Judging. The reduplication of the cognitional structure would be the elevation of the contents of that Experiencing by “understanding one’s experience of experience, understanding and judging and judging one’s understanding of experience, understanding and judging to be correct.”⁶² Such reduplication is coming to know Knowing, and insofar as I am the conscious Operator of my Operations, then it is coming to know myself as a Knower. Thus, it is in this sense that Lonergan means the phrase, “Self-Appropriation,” and “self-appropriation is something you do yourself.”⁶³

Self-appropriation, however, should be distinguished from any kind of intuitive self-consciousness. Even at the level of Experience, in which the Subject is given as Subject, there is the mediation of the Operations for which the conscious Subject is the Operator. Just as much as Operations are never, strictly speaking, unconscious, so consciousness “in itself” is only an abstraction.⁶⁴ Furthermore, any *knowledge* of the Subject would involve the further mediating processes of the cognitional structure as explained in Chapter 3, i.e. inquiry, Understanding, Judgment. Further still, in

⁶¹ “Cognitional Structure,” 208.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *Understanding and Being*, 19.

⁶⁴ David Oyler, “Experience and Consciousness,” (paper presented at West Coast Methods Institute, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA, April 12th, 2011).

order for the data of consciousness to be inquired about and understood, the Operations to be understood have to be objectified. “In what does this objectification consist?” Lonergan writes in *Method in Theology*, “It is a matter of applying the operations as intentional to the operations as conscious.”⁶⁵ In Chapter 2, this involved applying terms like Experiencing, Understanding, and Judging to those (sets of) Operations and then setting those terms into conceptualized relations to be understood. Insofar as Chapter 3 was successful in bringing the reader to recognize in his or her own cognitive behavior the relations (and thus, related terms) I presented abstractly, that chapter was an aid to Self-Appropriation by means of presenting adequate objectifications. Lonergan’s *Insight* and *Understanding and Being* are pedagogical presentations aiming to occasion the same recognition and apprehension.

Self-Affirmation

Self-Appropriation, insofar as it produces knowledge of Knowing as a Formally Dynamic Structure of Self-Transcending Intentional Operations, culminates in a Judgment. The content of that act of Judging can be formulated as “Yes, I am a knower.” It is an answer to the question, “Am I a knower?” It is an answer that presupposes experiences of and insights into the Conscious Operations of the Subject inquiring. Such an answer in the affirmative to this sort of question is what Lonergan calls Self-Affirmation. In *Insight*, Lonergan writes:

By ‘self-affirmation’ is meant that the self both affirms and is affirmed. By ‘self-affirmation of the knower’ is meant that the self affirmed is characterized by such occurrences as sensing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned (judging), and affirming.⁶⁶

It is, in this sense, a concrete judgment of fact. I am not affirming that I exist as a knower necessarily, but only as a matter of fact. However, it should be noted that to reply in the negative, “No, I am not a

⁶⁵ *Method*, 14.

⁶⁶ *Insight*, 344.

knower,” is to posit a reply at odds with its meaning.⁶⁷ However, that self-contradiction has its ground not just in a logical or conceptual contradiction. It is also at odds with the very practical, concrete performance by which one would have to produce such a reply, so long as it was more than a mere uncomprehending utterance of syllables.

This performative or practical aspect of self-affirmation, however, reveals the respect in which the set of Operations that differentiates the rational third level of consciousness is not exempt from the Self-Transcending character of all STIOs.⁶⁸ In Self-Affirmation, one Knows that he or she is the conscious Operator of a Formally Dynamic Structure of STIOs by consciously and concretely *enacting* the Formally Dynamic Structure of STIOs. Consequent upon this knowledge, it becomes possible for the operating Subject (that each of us is) to elevate the content of the self-affirming Judgment into a yet-higher context. In this context, one may come to realize that just as Self-Appropriation and Self-Affirmation are something, as Lonergan says, “you do yourself,” so it is with all coming-to-know. Though one had previously been performing these Operations spontaneously, Self-Affirmation sets the conditions for one to enact them responsibly. Thus, the Judgment, “Yes, I am a knower,” transcends itself to become the condition of responsible Operation on what Lonergan calls the “fourth level of consciousness.”

Self-Constitution

In addition to Judgments, one also makes Decisions. Indeed, cognitional Operations can occur spontaneously and immediately, as they did in the small children observed by Jean Piaget to produce the works cited by Lonergan in Chapter Two of *Method in Theology* and elsewhere. They may also occur mediated by Understanding to the Subject, though just as spontaneously. I might know what I do when I

⁶⁷ Ibid., 353-356.

⁶⁸ Self-Transcending in the second sense described in Chapter 3, i.e. transcending itself as an operation into the next level of consciousness and that level’s Operation(s).

Know. Such knowledge is typically the fruit of protracted self-inspection and is achieved “at the summit of a long ascent.”⁶⁹ It is another thing, however, to take up the performance of cognitional Operations as one’s personal responsibility, such that they occur as the result of rationally informed choice. It is in this respect that the self-knowledge made explicit in Self-Affirmation serves a normative function, such that Lonergan gleans from it what he called the “transcendental precepts”: Be Attentive, Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable, Be Responsible.⁷⁰ It bears repeating that one may, more than merely know one’s Knowing, come to take responsibility for it.⁷¹ And thereby, implicitly, one may take responsibility for one’s Experiencing.

However, insofar as I am the consciously Operating Subject of my cognitional Operations, when I take intelligent and reasonable responsibility for those operations, I am constituting myself as a more or less authentic Knowing (and thereby Doing) Subject. The task of self-appropriation, when successfully pursued, heals any critical sundering of knowing, doing, and being.⁷² If Knowing is a concrete Structure of Operations that can itself be Known by the enactment of that Structure, then knowing, doing, and being are intimately bound together in the authentic performance of human subjectivity. This aspect of concrete cognitional activity is implied by the Formal quality of the Dynamic Structure of STIOs. Though the Operator is the agent of the STIOs, *as Operator*, the Subject is self-constituting by means of the Operations. More needs to be said about how it is that the Operating Subject is an agent of STIOs, but first a further aspect of Self-Constitution needs to be addressed.

⁶⁹ *Insight*, 558.

⁷⁰ *Method*, 20.

⁷¹ It is worth noting that this may be seen as the core of Lonergan’s worthwhile preoccupation with method. A method is a specification of the general exhortation to authentic cognitional activity found in the transcendental precepts.

⁷² For a discussion of how Kantian philosophy perpetrated the sundering of the unity found in *praxis*, see Maurice Blondel, *Action (1893)*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 40.

Effective Freedom

In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan writes:

Not only does the fourth (responsible) level sublimate the previous three, but also the previous three differ notably from the speculative intellect that was supposed to grasp self-evident and necessary truths. Such a speculative intellect could and did claim complete autonomy: *bad will could hardly interfere with the apprehension of self-evident and necessary truth or with the necessary conclusions following from such truth*. In fact, however, what human intelligence grasps in data and expresses in concepts is, not a necessarily relevant intelligibility, but only a possibly relevant intelligibility. Such intelligibility is intrinsically hypothetical and so always in need of a further process of checking and verifying before it can be asserted as *de facto* relevant to the data in hand.⁷³ (emphasis added)

One might be able to see why “bad will” could affect the apprehension of the truth. I may be somehow unwilling to be thorough in the enactment of my cognitional Operations, such that I accept the first bright idea I have as though it were the truth, and thus I am unwilling to go about the hard work of “checking and verifying.” Or, perhaps, I have some pre-critical bias that squashes the wonder that might raise questions that would bring my allegiance to myself, my group, my common sense into question. So, I refuse those questions without knowing it.⁷⁴ If I never ask some question, I can never come upon an answer to it, and thus never know the pertaining fact. Thus, various kinds of bad will can undermine the proper functioning of the cognitional structure.

Of course, one of the possible and not insignificant benefits of Self-Appropriation culminating in Self-Affirmation is that it is an aid in deliberate and methodical Self-Constitution. However, all the Self-Affirmation in the world will not help with deliberate Self-Constitution if one is not *willing* to take responsibility for that long and difficult process. For Lonergan, Willingness means “the state in which persuasion is not needed to bring one to action.”⁷⁵ Such a “state” can (indeed correctly) be thought of as

⁷³ *Method*, 317.

⁷⁴ On Lonergan’s notion of “biases,” see *Insight*, 214-227 and 244-257.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 646.

a psychological state, such as anxiousness or calmness. However, that phenomenological approach to Willingness may obscure a more abstract meaning implied by Lonergan's account of Willingness. The bounds of one's willingness are manifest, in *Insight*, in one's "routines" and "habits."⁷⁶ The Willingness that is antecedent to some deliberate action is constrained by the sorts of actions one has taken before, and so it can be understood as what one is *likely* to do. It can be understood on an analogy with statistical trends.

The "height and breadth and depth" of one's antecedent Willingness is what Lonergan calls one's Effective Freedom. In contrast with one's Essential Freedom, which is the possibility of being the responsible agent of one's actions at all,⁷⁷ Effective Freedom is the practical horizon of what one is willing (and thus likely) to do. It emerges spontaneously, much like the expanding horizon of one's learning, but it can also become truncated by biases, laziness or other forms of bad will. Moreover, once one has come to some kind of Self-Appropriation and also taken responsibility for one's Self-Constitution, the further expansion of one's horizon of Effective Freedom is a practical achievement. It is a hard won development, produced by overcoming the limitations imposed on one's Willingness by the bald fact that each of us must live before he or she knows how to live well.⁷⁸ This limitation Lonergan calls Moral Impotence, and it is overcome only insofar as we are antecedently willing to do whatever the concrete moral and ethical exigencies of our lives proximately, and the unfolding universe more generally, demand of us. Indeed, this general condition is why Lonergan sets out something called Universal Willingness as the solution to and resolution of Moral Impotence. He writes, in *Insight*, "For unless one's antecedent willingness has the height and breadth and depth of the unrestricted desire to know, the emergence of rational self-consciousness (i.e. the fourth, responsible level of consciousness)

⁷⁶ Ibid., 646-645.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 643-645.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 647, 650.

involves the addition of a restriction upon one's effective freedom."⁷⁹ Universal Willingness means having unrestricted height, breadth, and depth in one's practical horizon.

Conclusion: Openness as Achievement And The Unrestricted Desire to Know

Implied, then, in the Self-Constitution of one's Willingness and the operational quality of cognition, is a priority of *praxis* for Experience, at least from the concrete, existential viewpoint. It is possible to live and act in such a way that one forecloses or avoids certain modes of operating or certain classes of cognitional Objects. Lonergan's cognitional theory, including his account of cognition's concrete performance by a Self-Constituting Subject, provides the resources for indicating *two* possible lacunae in philosophies of religious experience. The first was the possible inattention to the Data of Consciousness arrived at in Chapter 2. The second is implied in the above, insofar as the existential Subject may have a horizon of Willingness that is insufficiently expanded to admit of the experiential contents that pertain to *religious* experience. Moreover, while the first lacuna might be closed by a shift of attention to what is already given in one's conscious subjectivity, the second can only be closed by an opening of one's antecedent Willingness by some kind of re-habituating. If this latter, limited notion of Experience is borne by my reader, the words on this page and the meanings they express can only be a beginning in the expansion of his or her practical horizon.

Fortunately, there is a principle of horizon expansion, and thus of Self-Transcendence, that is not dependent upon my words, my meanings, or any other particular, "external" agent of development. It must be admitted that some objects, situations, and/or meanings make development more or less likely. Such difference in fitness for aiding development is what teachers strive to discern and produce for their students. It is what educational theorists try to understand in order to aid teachers. Nonetheless, such objects, situations, and meanings can find purchase at all only because the cognitional Structure

⁷⁹ Ibid., 646.

possessed by their students is not just constituted by basic terms and basic relations, but also by a basic orientation. The basic orientation of Lonergan's cognitional theory is the Unrestricted Desire to Know, which he equates with Openness, to return at long last to "Openness and Religious Experience."

What, then, is the Unrestricted Desire to Know? First and most simply, it is the desire to understand correctly and to act in light of that correct understanding.⁸⁰ Thus, the Unrestricted Desire to Know is manifest in questions. Indeed, question asking is the primary mode of selective objectification for cognitional Operations. Questions pick out that about which we would like to know. Though any given question is restricted to the objective of that question, there is nothing about which we cannot inquire in principle. Or, put another way, the Unrestricted Desire to Know wants to know everything about everything. Moreover, the Unrestricted Desire to Know is the source, immanent to the Formally Dynamic Structure of Knowing, of Self-Transcendence in the Intentional Operations and their conscious Operator, the Subject. In other words, asking questions about some experiential content gives rise to insights, asking reflective questions ("Is this true?") gives rise to judgments, and asking deliberative questions ("Is this worthwhile?") gives rise to decisions and actions. The basic orientation that is the Unrestricted Desire to Know orients us to and engages us with a universe of experiential, intelligible, actual, and valuable objects.

Greater sense can now be made of Openness as Fact and Openness as Achievement. Openness as fact is the dynamic orientation to the universe that puts our cognitional structure into action. Openness as Achievement is that Fact in its concrete development by means of cognitional Operations and powered by the Unrestricted Desire to Know. Though Openness as Achievement is conditioned by how attentive, intelligent, and reasonable the Subject has been, it is (as Achievement) fundamentally a matter of decision and action. Openness as Achievement is the extent to which the responsible Subject has been willing to follow the self-transcending trajectory of the Unrestricted Desire to Know (and, thus, Act) in

⁸⁰ Ibid., 660.

expanding his or her horizon. It is, in this same register, the measure of that Subject's Effective Freedom. And, lastly, it is also a conditioning constraint upon the world available to the operating Subject in Experience.

CHAPTER 5

RELIGIOUS IN THE FIRST AND SECOND ORDER

We ask questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, questions for deliberation to transcend from Experience to Understanding, from Understanding to Judgment, from Judgment to Decision and Action. The matter of raising further questions is an expression of our immanent source of Self-Transcendence, the Unrestricted Desire to Know and (insofar as Knowing consists in Operations) to Act. Initially, however, that desire is manifested only spontaneously and is vulnerable to all the truncations that come with living before one knows how to live. We are, each of us, having to achieve Openness and develop our cognitional authenticity with a restricted Openness and an underdeveloped set of cognitional habits. In Chapter 4, I noted that Lonergan called this disproportion Moral Impotence. There is, however, a more fundamental disproportion in Lonergan's cognitional theory. The desire for knowledge, after all, is not the attainment of knowledge and "man's unrestricted desire to know is mated to a limited capacity to *attain* knowledge."⁸¹ Consequently, "the range of possible questions," manifesting our unrestricted desire, "is larger than the range of possible answers."⁸² The same disproportion holds at the fourth, responsible level of consciousness. There is an Unrestricted Desire to Decide and Act and a restricted capacity to Decide and Act. In this chapter, I will discuss the Objective of our Unrestricted Desire to Know and Act and I will account for the restrictedness of our capacity to Know and responsibly Act. Also, I will attempt to show the link between this disproportion and how Lonergan understood Religious Experience. Lastly, I will introduce a distinction, not explicit in Lonergan, between First Order and Second Order Religious Experience.

⁸¹ *Insight*, 662.

⁸² *Ibid.*

The Objective of The Unrestricted Desire to Know

The basic orientation of our Formally Dynamic Structure of Self-Transcending Intentional Operations is an unrestricted desire. But an unrestricted desire has an unrestricted Objective. That Objective, as unrestricted, could not give itself immediately to our cognitional Operations. Whatever such an unrestricted Objective might be, it could not be given as an Object of Experience, because it would have to be either a) a spatially and/or temporally determinate Object₁ to occasion the Data of Sense or b) some psychologically and cognitively determinate act of the conscious Subject and thus given in the Data of Consciousness. Moreover, since Understanding and Judgment follow on inquiry *into* the Data of Experience, it could not be given as an Object of those Operations either. Nor could it emerge as a prospective Object of value to be realized in Decision and Action. As the French Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel writes, the absolute fulfillment of our fundamental desire is “impracticable.”⁸³

Rather, the Objective of our Unrestricted Desire to Know and Act may be given in our horizon of meaning (and action, presumably) as intended by questions. However, these are questions that make manifest an unrestricted *desire*. As such, the Unrestricted Objective may or may not exist, for it is intended heuristically because of the verified desire. The existence of an unrestricted desire in the being of the conscious Subject logically presupposes neither that the Objective of that desire exists, nor that it is attainable for the desiring Subject.⁸⁴ Moreover, because in principle there are no Data on the Objective itself, verifying the existence of the Objective becomes an indirect and somewhat complicated prospect. However, the *question* of the Objective does lie within the horizon of the Subject because the desire it expresses is constitutive of that horizon. The Objective is intended in those questions, and thereby is *objectified* as a determinate (and thus not unrestricted) objective. This is the price of making the

⁸³ *Action*, 297.

⁸⁴ *Insight*, 660-661.

Objective available to our conscious Operations. Still, it is intended in the question *as* transcendent. Transcendence in this case means merely that it is other, on account of being unrestricted, than those finite Objects given via Data.⁸⁵ Which is to say, the Objective as intended is disproportionate to the structured Operations.

Bracketing for now the complicated question of whether or not the Objective of our Unrestricted Desire to Know and Act exists, it is still possible to heuristically list some of the objectifications produced by asking about the Objective. Such objectifications follow from the distinctions produced by adequate Self-Appropriation, namely responsible, reasonable, intelligent and empirical consciousness. First, the transcendent Objective may be objectified, as the Objective of the Unrestricted Desire to Act, by an unrestricted Value, or goodness. Second, it may be objectified, as the Objective of the Unrestricted Desire to Judge correctly, by an unrestricted Truth, or being. Third, it may be objectified, as the Objective of the Unrestricted Desire to Understand, by an unrestricted Intelligibility, or idea. Lastly, because spatio-temporal presence supposes limitedness intrinsically, the objectification of the Unrestricted Desire to Experience becomes a question. Presupposing the technical understanding of Consciousness and the Data of Consciousness expounded above, the transcendent Objective might be objectified by an unrestricted consciousness.

It is important, however, to remember that these objectifications are just that: objectifications of something that in principle is not given in the mode of an Object. This disjunction, between the possibly existing Objective and the objectifications necessary to ask about it and its existence, might derail helpful inquiry into such an Objective. All-too-human knowers and doers might well settle into the tragedy that our basic orientation is to something that, if it exists at all, is available to us only through the contortions of the objectified, and thus is never *really* available to us. On the other hand, this is only

⁸⁵ This is as opposed to the notion of transcendence that is commonly opposed to immanence, which spatializes the ontological difference. Lonergan blames such spatializations on “the mistaken supposition that knowing consists in taking a look” and so the field of determinate beings is literally a spatial expanse. The transcendent, then, must be what is past the horizon of that expanse. But horizons recede with the observer. See *Insight*, 657-659.

a limit case of something the student of Lonergan has already encountered. The Subject as Subject, recall, is not given to consciousness in the mode of an Object. Knowledge of and Decisions about the Subject as Subject inherently require objectifications. Though such objectifications require caveats for the sake of clarity, they did not, in the case of the Subject as Subject, disqualify the knowledge produced thereby from being relevant to the Data of Consciousness. Instead, cognitively and practically fruitful self-knowledge is gleaned by such objectifications of the Data of Consciousness not given in the mode of an Object. That objectifications are necessary to ask about the Objective of our Unrestricted Desire does not, of itself, disqualify us from generating knowledge relevant to that Objective, so long as the inquirer does not mistake objectifications for direct Data.

Second and First Order Religious Experiences

Any knowledge relevant to the Objective, such as whether it exists or is truly good, would be generated by inquiry into and ongoing engagement with finite, question-generated objectifications. For Lonergan, this amounts to asking after the ground of our questioning, which manifests in turn our orientation towards Self-Transcendence. At the start of *Method in Theology*'s chapter on religion, Lonergan writes, "We can inquire into the possibility of fruitful inquiry. We can reflect on the nature of reflection. We can deliberate whether our deliberating is worthwhile. In each case, there arises the question of God."⁸⁶ A page later, he calls the question of God, "the question that questions questioning itself."⁸⁷ In any case, the mediation of questions produces the mediation of objectifications. Calling the Unrestricted Objective of our Unrestricted Desire to Know "God" is one such objectification. These objectifications are possibly relevant to the Objective of our Unrestricted Desire to Know, the basic fulfillment of our capacity for Self-Transcendence, and the ultimate achievement of our Openness,

⁸⁶ *Method*, 101.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 102.

which are of course all the same thing. And, according to Lonergan, they have something to do with God.

If Lonergan is right, then our Experience of those objectifications provide what I want to call a Second Order Religious Experiences. Those objectifications become the Data, presented in meaningful language or images, for Understandings, Judgments, Decisions, and Actions that are possibly relevant to the transcendent Objective of our Unrestricted Desire. Remember that Data is not just bits of sense, information, or stuff, but the conscious correlative Object of the Operation(s) of Experience. By means of those mediations, some finite Data of Sense can come to be the objectified Object of mediated inquiry into and responsible engagement with the Unrestricted Objective. The objectifications become a possible means of finite and indirect access to the Unrestricted Objective that we desire unrestrictedly, but can attain and enact only restrictedly. As mediating, such Experiences are Religious in two senses. First, it is Religious as making consciously accessible something that is unavailable to our conscious Operations because Transcendent. Second, such Experience is Religious because it informs the achievement of our Openness by objectifying its immanent and normative thrust to transcendence. That dynamic thrust needs to be Objectified, not because it is for the Transcendent, but because it is given in the Data of Consciousness as the basic orientation of the Subject.

This notion of religious experience is perhaps not very novel or exciting. Taken on its own, it might make one wonder what all the philosophical fuss has been about. One encounters the objectifications of the Objective of our Unrestricted Desire to Know certainly many times more often than one passes a church in a week and certainly not less often than that. Thus, there is an objection to be met in the commonness of such encounters. After all, do not many pass by or even enter churches (and other places of religious meaning) without having this kind of Religious Experience, or any other

for that matter?⁸⁸ They only see statues and stained glass. They only hear antiquated music played on antiquated instruments, often sung by antiquated voices. Recall, however, that the character of the Object, Operation, and Operator are reciprocally differentiating and defining depending upon different viewpoints. Recall the difference between numbers in arithmetic and numbers in algebra. The explanatory power of distinguishing Second Order Religious Experience (which Lonergan calls “the word” in *Method in Theology*) is in meeting precisely this objection.⁸⁹

Second Order Religious Experiences are Experiences of an expressed objectification of the Unrestricted Objective *as* an objectification of the Objective of the Unrestricted Desire to Know and Act. If one denies that there is an Unrestricted Desire and/or an Unrestricted Objective, one might experience such an objectification of the “belief in” or “commitment” to that Desire and Objective. One will not be likely, however, to experience that expressed objectification *as* an objectification of precisely the religious kind for him or her self. Instead one will likely read strange sounding stories or likely see historically interesting architecture. I say “likely” because perhaps the expressed objectification can be the occasion for a new or long-since-forgotten Second Order Religious Experience. If the Unrestricted Desire to Know is operative in the conscious Operation of all consciously operating Subjects, then it is in principle possible for the expressed objectifications of the Unrestricted Objective to be discovered as having a meaningful connection to the consciousness of that Unrestricted Desire and its Objective in one’s self. One might conceive religious education as a cultivation of religious literacy, such that one can have common access to the mediations provided by Second Order Religious Experiences of the Objects expressing the objectification of God. Such literacy would consist in the increased likelihood that Second Order Religious Experiences occur in the conscious life of a Subject formed in the tradition with which he or she is now familiar.

⁸⁸ A beautiful account of such an a-religious experience can be found in Philip Larkin’s poem, “Church Going,” which I first encountered in *The Portable Atheist*, a volume edited by Christopher Hitchens. (Philip Larkin, “Church Going,” in *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the NonBeliever*, 209-10 [Philadelphia, PA: De Capo Press, 2007].)

⁸⁹ *Method*, 112-115.

Why, though, are such Religious Experiences merely Second Order? One reason (among others) is that, when Lonergan addresses religious experience in *Method in Theology* and “Openness and Religious Experience,” he subordinates subsequent expressions to “the proper fulfillment of that capacity (for self-transcendence).”⁹⁰ If such proper or basic fulfillment occurs, it is the unrestricted expansion of one’s horizon of Openness and as such Lonergan identifies it with Openness as Gift.⁹¹ It is something that, for the reasons explored above, cannot be enacted by the Operations of the finitely conscious Subject, but it *happens* to him or her. Any Data correlative to the Experience of such a fulfillment would be Data of Consciousness and thus direct Data only on the “Experiencer.” It would be an Experience of the Subject as Subject, but as brought to some kind of conscious fulfillment of his or her basic orientation. This order of religious experience, which I am calling First Order Religious Experience, is to be distinguished from the Experience of mediating Objects that occasions Second Order Religious Experience. Rather, insofar as they affirm an “encounter” with the Objective, Objectifications that pertain to Second Order Religious Experience would be objectifying expressions of First Order Religious Experience. Second Order Religious Experiences could, at least in principle, not bear on any kind of affirmation of the heretofore-impracticable attainment of the Unrestricted Objective. They could be merely negative, and thus experiences of “the abyss,” of yawning meaninglessness, of infinitely frustrated desire, etc. If there is some kind of conscious fulfillment of our Openness, however, the objectifications produced would be of the consciousness of the Subject as Subject now brought to its unrestricted fulfillment in what Lonergan calls “Being in love with God.”⁹² Chapter 6 will endeavor to differentiate the aspects and factors immanent to First Order Religious Experience. For now, this chapter will have served to distinguish the First Order from the Second Order Religious Experiences.

⁹⁰ *Method*, 106.

⁹¹ “Openness,” 185.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 105.

CHAPTER 6

THE GIFT AND THE UNDER-TOW

At the end of Chapter 5, I distinguished between Second and First Order Religious Experiences. There, I identified Second Order Religious Experiences with the expressed objectifications of the Unrestricted Objective of the Unrestricted Desire to Know and Act. Such expressions and the experience thereof have an important role in Lonergan's model of collaborative theological research, but to say much more about them than I have in regard to objectification would take this study too far afield.⁹³ The brief sketch of First Order Religious Experiences in Chapter 5, however, will be expanded in this chapter. I take Lonergan to be speaking strictly of what I am calling First Order Religious Experiences in the third subsection of Chapter 4 in *Method in Theology* quoted in Chapter 1 above. Moreover, the previous four chapters have provided the conceptual resources to facilitate elaborating Lonergan's notion of Religious Experience at length, without having to stop regularly to correct for the "plain" or competing technical meanings of Lonergan's terms.

It will be good, before proceeding, to recall those conceptual resources, in their broad strokes. Recall, then, that in Chapter 3 there was distinguished the Data of Sense given to the Operations at the level of Experience and the Data of Consciousness that is the Operating Subject present to him or herself as Operating. Recall also that in Chapter 4 there was elaborated a higher, integrating and subsuming level of conscious Decision and Action, at which the horizon of one's Experience was achieved through the more or less authentic enactment of one's cognitional Operations. Lastly, recall in Chapter 5 the disproportion between our Unrestricted Desire to Know and Act and our capacity to Know and Act. That disproportion was explained in terms of 1) Moral Impotence, in which we must live with underdeveloped habits of cognition before we have the self-knowledge to take responsibility for developing

⁹³ See *Method*, 125-145.

those habits and 2) the finitude of our Subjectivity made manifest in the need for objectifications in cognition.

The Restricted Achievement and Unrestricted Fulfillment of Openness

Second Order Religious Experiences are engagements with the expressed objectifications that, most basically, make cognitively available to us that to which we are fundamentally oriented but that is disproportionate to our cognitive capacities. The Objects of such Experiencing are, of themselves, a product of our natural finitude. Moral Impotence is produced by the concrete context of our development and is thus an *a posteriori* limitation on the expansion of our horizon. The more basic disproportion of our cognitional Operations to anything that does not give itself as a determinate Object or objectification is an *a priori* limitation on the expansion of human horizons. The religious objectifications are a way of indicating beyond our reach, but are first expressions of our desire to Self-Transcend. They do not, at least as regards the Absolutely Transcendent, prove any success on our part to do so. Thus, our Openness as Achievement has certain constraints built into our means of horizon expansion and Self-Constitution. Though it is oriented beyond itself in the Unrestricted Desire to Know, our natural horizon is a restricted horizon.

Bearing this in mind, I would like to return to *Method in Theology*'s section on religious experience. Again, we see that Lonergan writes:

Being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations. Just as unrestricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfillment of that capacity.⁹⁴

The language of "being in love with God" does, indeed, emerge from the Judeo-Christian tradition of which Lonergan was, as a Jesuit priest, a part. It bespeaks the cultural particularity of his objectifications of the Unrestricted Objective. Nonetheless, it is not a merely imagistic turn of phrase. Because our

⁹⁴ Ibid., 106.

capacity for and dynamic orientation towards Self-Transcendence is grounded in the Unrestricted Desire to Know and Act, the proper fulfillment of that capacity and orientation would be an encounter, however basic, with the Objective of that Desire. Furthermore, because that capacity is for *Self-Transcendence*, it would be, not just a receptive encounter, but an encounter characterized by an invitation to some kind of existential commitment, such as self-commitment or self-surrender. Lonergan is not falling prey to mere sentimentality when, in the preceding section, he describes this fulfillment as “falling in love.”⁹⁵ The fulfillment of our capacity for Self-Transcendence includes the proposal for reciprocation that is analogous to the desire for mutual recognition between lovers. Moreover, an unrestricted falling in love implicitly has an unrestricted beloved. So, there are sound reasons internal to Lonergan’s more philosophical objectifications of First Order Religious Experience to refer to it as loving God in an unrestricted fashion, even though such language is associated with a particular religious confession.

Though the conceptual coherence of “being in love with God” with Lonergan’s larger cognitional theory can be defended as above, there is a further complication. How can a Subject, restricted by the very finite nature of its cognitional structure, realize in his or her conscious being unrestricted Self-Transcendence? Certainly, the *desire* for such an unrestricted fulfillment is implied in Openness as Fact, but any hope of actualization seemed precluded by the means that produce this or that instance of Openness as Achievement in this or that concrete Subject. It seems precluded by both the *a posteriori* and *a priori* limitations on the concrete subject. However, Lonergan continues:

That fulfillment is not the product of our knowledge and choice. On the contrary, it dismantles and abolishes the horizon in which our knowing and choosing went on and it sets up a new horizon(.)⁹⁶

For Lonergan, being in love with God is something that, though it is disproportionate to us as the Operators of our Knowing and Doing, can still occur in the Operation of our Knowing and Doing.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 105.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 106.

Patrick Byrne, in an article about how to conceive which “level” of consciousness on which such a fulfillment occurs, makes the fascinating suggestion that we can understand this unrestricted Operation as having God as its Operator.⁹⁷ Lonergan, for his part, appeals to Romans 5:5 to illustrate how such a fulfillment could occur. “It is God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.”⁹⁸

First Order Religious Experience As Experienced

Of course, once one begins to make judgments about what God does or does not do, one is doing theology. The task at hand, however, is the philosophy of religious experience. Lonergan’s formulation, “being in love with God in an unrestricted fashion” is itself a plainly theological way of speaking. Though I believe I can and have defended the theoretical seriousness of that way of speaking, this study has three different formulations at its disposal. Out of deference to philosophical sensibilities, I will shy away from using “being in love with God in an unrestricted fashion.” I could, of course, also use the phrase, “the fulfillment of our capacity for Self-Transcendence.” Though that formulation offers precision, it is unwieldy. I will hew instead towards the formulation, offered in “Openness and Religious Experience,” Openness as Gift. It is short enough to be convenient, and implies the double aspect of an expanded existential horizon and some transcendent relation included in what I am calling here First Order Religious Experiences.

How, then, does this fulfillment of the conscious Subject’s capacity for Self-Transcendence give itself to the Subject as *Experience*? In the following, First Order Religious Experience will be considered insofar as it is a Dynamic, Non-Intentional State. First, it is a State, as opposed to an Operation. Second, it is a Non-Intentional State, insofar as it has a content, but no Object. Third, it is a Dynamic Non-Intentional State because, as experienced, it is conscious at the fourth, responsible level

⁹⁷ Patrick Byrne, “Consciousness: Levels, Sublations, and the Subject as Subject,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* vol. 13 no.2. (Fall, 1995), 148.

⁹⁸ *Method*, 105.

of conscious Operation. Lastly, I will discuss briefly one manner in which First Order Religious Experience is elevated from the level of mere Experience in order to be Known and, perhaps most importantly, Co-operated with in Conversion.

Lonergan, borrowing from Dietrich von Hildebrand, introduces the notion of a conscious State in his discussion of Feelings in the second Chapter of *Method in Theology*.⁹⁹ States are distinguished from Feelings that are Intentional responses to Objects of Value. States are non-intentional, which is to say that they do not make present to the conscious Subject an Object. “The states,” Lonergan writes, “have causes,” and not Objects.¹⁰⁰ He offers irritability as an example of a State. One first experiences one’s self as irritable (State), and only later, perhaps after having spoken sharply to someone, does one objectify the cause of that irritability as, perhaps, a lack of sleep. The Subject is conscious of a certain quality to his or her experience of the Subject as Subject. With States, that quality has a cause made manifest in a conscious content, but no Intentional Object is made present. Rather, an objectification has to be produced.

Thus, to call a State (whether the mundane state of fatigue or the trans-natural state of Openness as Gift) “Non-Intentional” is something of a redundancy. By way of illustrating the conscious quality of the State that First Order Religious Experiences are, Lonergan compares them to Otto’s *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*, being grasped by ultimate concern in Tillich, and (perhaps most to this point) Karl Rahner’s reading of St. Ignatius of Loyola’s “consolation without a cause.” On Rahner’s reading, this means, not that the State is properly speaking *causeless*, but rather that it is “a consolation with a content, but without an object.”¹⁰¹ Indeed, all States would have a conscious content, given as Data of Consciousness, but would not have an Object. The Dynamic, Non-Intentional State of First Order

⁹⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church, Quaestiones disputate 12* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964), 131. Cited by Lonergan in *Method*, 106.

Religious Experience, however, can not be directly objectified in the same way that fatigue or irritability can be attributed to lack of sleep. Such “religiously conscious” States, thus, can be a mysterious, awe-inducing, or even terrifying experience.¹⁰² There can be no adequate topography in which to locate such States, which is troubling when one’s common experience of conscious States is always cognizable as relation to some cause or causal Object.

Openness as Gift is a Dynamic State. “It is conscious on the fourth level of intentional consciousness.”¹⁰³ The fourth level of conscious Operation, recall, is the operational set that makes up Responsible consciousness. That one might Experience on the Responsible level may seem a strange notion on its face. However, recall also that consciousness is the Experience of the Data of Consciousness that accompanies *any* and *all* conscious Operations, including those on the levels characterized by Decisions and Actions. Experience is not only those Operations proper to Experience of the Data of Sense (Seeing, Hearing, Imagining, etc.), but also being conscious while performing any Operation. Thus it is that Lonergan, again drawing on the Christian scriptures in Galatians 5:22, will say that being in love with God is “a conscious dynamic state of love, joy, peace, that manifests itself in acts of kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.”¹⁰⁴ In other (less overtly Christian) words, the fulfillment of our Self-Transcendence is experienced “not as an act,” however, “but as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts.”¹⁰⁵ The Subject that experiences this unrestricted fulfillment is conscious of him or herself “as ready to deliberate and judge and decide and act with the

¹⁰² *Method*, 111.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 240.

easy freedom of those that do all good because they are in love.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, Openness as Gift is experienced as primarily conditioning one’s Effective Freedom and antecedent Willingness.¹⁰⁷

There is yet a further implication in the fact that First Order Religious Experience is a *Dynamic* State. We can understand the proper fulfillment of our capacity for Self-Transcendence as what Lonergan spoke of as an “ultimate enlargement” of the Subject’s horizon of meaning and action. What heretofore had been the restricted, natural horizon of the Deciding and Acting Subject becomes the unrestricted horizon always implied by Openness as Fact. In other words, the Subject has become the recipient of Openness as Gift. It is Gift insofar as the Subject could not have self-constituted such a horizon as is concretely given in the consciousness of First Order Religious Experience. Hence Byrne’s argument that Religious Experience is an Operation for which God, and not the Subject, is the Operator. An unrestricted Operation, the reasoning goes, would require an Unrestricted Operator.

However, once such a horizon is given to the Subject, suddenly he or she is Effectively Free (i.e. has the antecedent Willingness) to do all sorts of things that before he or she was unwilling. This is what it means to say that the Dynamic State is prior to and principle of subsequent acts. Moreover, insofar as the cognitional Operations are themselves possible Acts of a responsible Subject, First Order Religious Experience can be the occasion for Judgments, Understandings, and, yes, Experiences of Objects that were otherwise closed off to the stunted capacity for Self-Transcendence found in this or that concrete, naturally finite Subject. Though it is beyond the scope of this essay, the downward conditioning of First Order Religious Experience on the lower levels of consciousness could provide a philosophical heuristic to account for the meaningfulness of a category of beliefs one might call “supernatural revelation.” In

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 107.

¹⁰⁷ This shift in willingness may be what Lonergan means when he calls religious experience a “basic” or “proper” fulfillment, as distinct from the total or complete fulfillment, which would be, in Christian theology, the Beatific Vision, in which we know God by God’s essence. Thanks to Dr. Patrick Byrne for bringing this subtle distinction to my attention.

that category would be those truths and understandings that could not be affirmed or developed without the prior experience of the conscious fulfillment of our unrestricted desire for Self-Transcendence.

The Self Transcended

If the existential, Responsible level of consciousness constitutes the Subject's horizon, and thereby constrains the possible contents of the conscious Subject's Operations and Objects, then a change at the fourth level would condition the lower three levels, including the Experiential level. It is possible then to conceive of someone who has received the ultimate expansion of their existential horizon from beyond his or her own capacities and taken full advantage. This person has cooperated with the fulfillment of his or her conscious intentionality and existential self-constitution and thus maintained, rather than a mere peak experience, a plateau experience, in which he or she is now self-constituting, in cooperation with the source of Openness as Gift, in a way that was previously not just improbable, but impracticable. Such a person, in Lonergan's parlance, is "religiously converted." As a result, not only is he or she capable of actions that had previously seemed beyond him or her, or affirming as true and intelligible things that previously seemed otherworldly, but in fact *Experiencing* Objects that had previously been unavailable to his or her perception. The whole world of experience might become "illuminated" and somehow oversaturated with the meaningfulness and value of the Unrestricted Objective of our basic, unrestricted orientation. Things which had previously been alluring or distracting are now fundamentally relativized by a new, unrestricted horizon, and thus become nearly "invisible" to him or her. Consequently, his or her immediate Experience of the world would have undergone a radical reconfiguration, mediated by re-habituation by co-Operation with the receipt of Openness as Gift. In discussing the mediations of meaning in Chapter 3 of *Method in Theology*, Lonergan mentions "a mediated return to immediacy."¹⁰⁸ Though Lonergan uses the terms Mediated Immediacy to refer to the limit cases of sexual and mystical ecstasy, I believe that Lonergan's

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 77.

Philosophy of Religious Experience suggests those cases lie at the end of a continuous spectrum of Mediate Immediacies made possible by the fulfillment of our capacity for Self-Transcendence. One example would be the sort of religious adept described above.

However, one might not have the resources for mediating the horizon-dismantling First Order Religious Experiences to one's self. Perhaps one lacks the literacy discussed in Chapter 5 to apprehend the meaning of Second Order Religious Experiences, and so is at a loss for how to objectify one's own First Order Religious Experiences. As Lonergan says, very often people are profoundly disturbed by such experiences and are given to wonder, "Am I going nuts?"¹⁰⁹ Why, though, would someone experience the fulfillment of his or her conscious capacities as so startling an experience? Why, if it is in continuity with Openness as Fact, can Openness as Gift seem discontinuous and heterogenous to one's Openness as Achievement? As the source of Self-Transcendence is an unrestricted desire, Self-Transcendence can sublimate and relativize even the self that is doing the transcending, because that self is restricted and finite by nature. Indeed, objectifications of God and Openness as Gift are in service of this restricted self, accommodating the self being transcended with Objects proportionate to its nature. Thus, the self (doing the) *transcending* can destabilize the self (being) *transcended*.

In the writings of the mystics, one might find descriptive accounts of what it is like when the self transcending undermines the self transcended.¹¹⁰ In St. John of the Cross' writings, for example, one finds a description of ever dwindling Subjectivity.¹¹¹ First all Objects of sense and thought slip away, but eventually even the faculties and the power to Operate is abandoned in the loss of Self into the unbounded, lightless night of the soul in God. Such an experience can be elevating and ecstatic (in the

¹⁰⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, ed. Robert C. Crocken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 194.

¹¹⁰ For the distinction between the self transcending and the self transcended, see *Method*, 111.

¹¹¹ St. John of the Cross, *St. John of the Cross: Selected Writings*, ed. Kieran Kavanaugh (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987).

technical and usual senses), but they may also be terrifying, disorienting, or befuddling. Even common notions of truth and goodness might become somehow sublated and relativized by holiness for this person.¹¹² Such a person would cut the strange, alluring, and sometimes bizarre figure of the holy fool.¹¹³ The spiritual practices that support these kind of mystical (non-)Experiences could be viewed as mediating a return to immediacy. It is, in all likelihood, an immediacy that is more radical than any unmediated immediacy given in the simplicity of the simplicity of infancy. It is an immediacy not just to the restricted world of biological interest, nor even merely to the universe of being and value, but to the unrestricted ground of being and value.

One need not, however, have such a radically ecstatic, mystical experience in order to discover the sublating and relativizing effect of First Order Religious Experiences. Much as one is called to consider the objective value of the universe over one's own satisfactions in an ethical mode of being, the new mode of being encountered in First Order Religious Experience calls us to consider even our ethical agency as recontextualized, relativized, and destabilized by a relation to the Unrestricted Objective of our fundamental desire. One finds him or herself to be reliant upon Openness as Gift in order to achieve Self-Constitution, and thereby in an unrestricted horizon of being and value to which to commit that self. As Kierkegaard put it in *The Sickness Unto Death*, a self is a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite, and it seeks to rest transparently on the power that established it.¹¹⁴ Such transparency is the promise of our being, and also its radical revision. Though it calls forth objectifications, it does not submit to them to be tamed.

¹¹² Ibid., 242.

¹¹³ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, trans. Mark Raftery-Skehan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 177-182.

¹¹⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Vol. 19 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 13-14.

A Note About Retrospect

“To say this dynamic state is conscious,” Lonergan reminds his reader, “is not to say that it is known.”¹¹⁵ By now that distinction should be very clear indeed. And, moreover, the above expressed just how it is such an experience could remain mere Experience. If one does not know that there is such a thing as the consciousness of one’s self as an Operating Subject to be paying attention to, then it is possible for even a radical shift in the quality of the Data of Consciousness to be overlooked altogether.¹¹⁶ Moreover, if one is deeply entrenched in biases in favor of one’s self, one’s group, or one’s common sense, then it is possible that the sorts of possibilities suddenly opened up by this experience of unrestricted Willingness will be horrifying, and thus squashed nearly as soon as it has begun. Moreover, if one’s culture or education lacks or lacked adequate expressions of the objectification of the Unrestricted Objective or of First Order Religious Experiences, then it is possible that one just does not have the descriptive or conceptual tools to properly elevate that experience above mere experience. Moreover, even if one has adequate objectifications with which to interpret one’s experience, perhaps there is just inadequate existential development for that process to proceed fruitfully. Much like there was an abstract correlate for the psychological experience of Willingness in the various quasi-statistical “likelihoods” implicit in one’s Effective Freedom, so too is there an abstract correlate for the psychological experience of being in love with God and having the infinite *élan* of one’s conscious intentionality fulfilled. Lonergan, later in *Method in Theology*, calls it “an under-tow of existential consciousness” that “is revealed in retrospect.”¹¹⁷ This under-tow has a similarly quasi-

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 106.

¹¹⁶ This shift, in fact, is considered sufficiently radical that in the mid-1990’s there was an intense debate among Lonergan scholars over whether that shift does or does not establish in the Subject a new, “fifth” level of consciousness. Obviously, I have ignored that controversy in this study. I am not convinced that reconfiguring the illustrative spatial metaphor of “levels” produces enough added understanding of First Order Religious Experience to merit complicating my analysis here with a report on and analysis of that discussion. For the primary record of that debate, see *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, vol. 13 no. 2 (Fall 1995).

¹¹⁷ *Method*, 240.

statistical quality to Willingness, and rightly so, insofar as the conscious fulfillment of one's capacity for Self-Transcendence is conscious precisely as an unrestricted Willingness for self-commitment. In other words, someone might recall her behavior in some situation or over a span of time, and note that she has been engaging in acts of goodness (even at her own expense) for which there does not appear to be any good reason in the self-constitution that had thereto shaped her Effective Freedom and antecedent Willingness. If that appearance holds up to scrutiny, then it may be likely that she has experienced, in some measure, the proper fulfillment of her capacity for Self-Transcendence. In other words, one may have been granted, as a Gift, an Openness that is disproportionate to the Openness one had achieved thereto. And much as in statistics, the longer the period of time in which that trend holds, the more certain one can be that he or she is not the source of this newfound horizon.

Therefore, the challenging task of coming to distinguish the radical revision of one's horizon via First Order Religious Experience from, for example, a psychotic break, requires adequate objectifications of the experience to facilitate retrospective reflection. Moreover, the sort of spiritual practices that facilitate the development of religious adepts require the sorts of objectifications that can serve to occasion Second Order Religious Experiences. Also, insofar as both the tasks of discernment and development demand the mutual mediation of a community, objectifications will be required to communicate the quality of First Order Religious Experiences, the meaningfulness of Second Order Religious Experiences, and the means for adjudicating differences between objectifications. The first communicative task will call forth (inter)personal expressions of the Experience of Openness as Gift. The second communicative task will call forth a religious tradition of meaningful signs, symbols, and practices. The third communicative task will call forth critical reflection on the other two in the form of something like a theology. Such are the difficult and complicated tasks of elevating First and Second Order Religious Experiences as *Experience* to Religious Experiences as *Known*.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

As Continental Philosophy of Religion gains scholarly momentum in both philosophical and theological contexts, the questions about evidence and data will persist. They will persist for two reasons already identified. First, some will overlook the Data of Consciousness altogether. Second, some will take the *de facto* expansion of their own horizon to be the true bounds of any meaningful horizon. The phenomenologist of religion and religious experience may produce excellent descriptive categories and analyses, and yet never find a means of facing those objections head on. The foregoing has endeavored to clarify Lonergan's philosophy of religious experience. That clarification may be seen as a resource for engaging fruitfully with objections about data.

In Chapter 2, it was made explicit how Lonergan conceived of a "philosophy of." Such systematic heuristic frames, in which basic terms are set into basic relations, can provide integrating order to the products of phenomenological investigations of diverse phenomenon. In Chapter 3, Lonergan's cognitional theory was spelled out, distinguishing the Data of Sense from the Data of Consciousness. It also introduced the notion of experiential content that is not given as an Object, but given in need of objectification. Chapter 4 indicated the relationship between the fourth, existential and Responsible level of consciousness and the Subject's Self-Constitution. In that context, it was shown how one's Willingness and Effective Freedom set conditions and constraints on one's horizon of Operation, and thereby Experience. In Chapter 5, the Unrestricted Desire to Know was identified as the source of expressed objectifications of an Unrestricted Objective. Those expressions are, in turn, the Objects of Second Order Religious Experiences. Lastly, in Chapter 6, First Order Religious Experiences were explored in three aspects. The first was their quality as fulfilling our conscious thrust to Self-Transcendence. The second was the destabilizing of the transcended self as the emergence of "mediated

immediacy.” Lastly, some of the means by which First Order Religious Experiences are elevated from mere experience to knowledge were briefly sketched.

It is possible, then, to identify three possible advantages offered to Continental Philosophy of Religion by Lonergan’s philosophy of religious experience. First, it provides a theoretical model of the conscious, intentional subject that includes data relevant to religious experience(s) and a means of critiquing those philosophies that deny the reality any such data. Second, it distinguishes the Experiences as objectified (Second Order) from the Experiences as conscious States (First Order), such that the twin methods of hermeneutics and phenomenology can more appropriately divide up the data for investigation. Third, it can help the philosopher of religion and the theologian both distinguish and integrate each other’s tasks and goals for a more fruitful collaboration on the frontier between the disciplines that the study of religion and religious experience presents. Though detailing precisely how these advantages of Lonergan’s philosophy of religious experience are to be conceived and applied would be another essay altogether, I hope these suggestions will be fruitful for the philosopher of religion who has taken the time to indulge his or her casual interest in Lonergan to read this study.

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