# The Theologian as Authentic Subject

# Lonergan and the Centrality of Method

by

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# Abstract

This thesis is concerned with understanding the relation between transcendent fulfilment of human life through relation to God, as declared in Church teaching, and finite fulfilment through knowing and loving.

It is dependent on the work of Bernard Lonergan SJ in arguing that understandings of the cognitional connection between subjectivity and objectivity have direct foundational implications for theology. Comparison and contrast is used to demonstrate the effect of 'conceptualist' and 'intellectualist' approaches. Authenticity of meanings and values is understood as resulting from sustained faithfulness to transcendental precepts of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible. Religious conversion, theology's foundational reality, adds the further precept of complete self-transcendence through unconditional being-in-love which involves ongoing conversion towards authenticity and consistent renunciation of unauthenticity.

It is maintained that since conceptual formulations bear the marks of an originating context, theology must always be contemporary and authenticity in regard to raising and answering questions is vital, requiring openness to collaboration, further knowledge, and further questions by religious traditions and theologians. The manner in which Christian faith is held to be true is as fundamental as truth itself.

## Statement of Originality

I, Alan Wade, hereby certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and affirm that to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

7th March, 2012.

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# Preface

The motivation for this thesis arises from an ongoing transformation of my self-understanding as a subject in relation to God through acquaintance with the work of Bernard Lonergan SJ. I have been enabled to understand a basic issue that had been the cause of confusion, unease, and self-doubt for many years. Since recognition of theology as the product of human minds is central to the thesis, this preface is an introduction to relevant formative influences on the mind of the writer.

The thesis arises from reflection on experience that has involved three major changes of 'spiritual habitat' or Christian tradition. The first major change was a decision to leave the Christadelphians, the exclusive and fundamentalist sect to which my family belonged, and become a Baptist. I received theological education, ministerial training, and was ordained and served as a Minister in the Baptist church before being received as a Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church. In what I pray is a final change, I was received into the Catholic Church. This sequence of changes was entwined with other profound changes in personal circumstances. It is a history that has been both sad and sorry as well as energising and expansive. Because my story is 'me', and I would not be who I am without it, I have no regrets about the changes of spiritual habitat. Instead I feel profoundly grateful for the spirit of questioning that engendered them and persisted with me despite the desire to settle down and rest.

Since the most influential formation is in childhood and youth, I will briefly indicate something of that experience. Christadelphians are a small group that originated in the mid-nineteenth century seceding from a movement known as Restorationism or Christian Primitivism. Their self-understanding is one restoring the simple faith of the first century '*ecclesias*' and of having discovered 'the Truth' of 'Bible teaching'. The

maintenance of a very limited horizon of thought, particularly in regard to scripture and history, is regarded as a matter of faithfulness and a necessary part of being 'separate from the world'.

When belonging to a faith community is a basic part of one's identity embodied in personal relationships, it is set in a large context. If renouncing the basis of faith of the group means being cut off from all that is known and familiar, including people who have been generous, supportive and influential in formative years, it can be easier to suppress questions, the answers to which might cause such disruption, than pursue them. Coming to the inevitable conclusion that the form of religious belief I had inherited was basically erroneous was a process undertaken only fitfully and reluctantly over years. Once the rejection of a tradition has taken place, there is heightened awareness that religious self-identity is a matter of personal responsibility, deliberation and choice. There is no stabilizing factor of "having always belonged" that indicates an identity with a sense of shared communal responsibility and which enables tensions and divisions to be more easily borne. A search begins for adequate foundations capable of providing the basis of a religious identity that is in the process of being formed.

My search took place with an in-built suspicion of propositional forms of expression of religious belief that claimed to be certain truth. At the same time, the question of God had also become the most important life question. Theological education, ministerial training and pastoral ministry in the Baptist and Uniting Churches led to a personal re-formation and an understanding that the realities of faith were known in a more direct, embodied and personal way by many great figures in the history of the Church than I had been prepared for in my childhood and youth. Theological reflection had then

been a matter of correct understanding of formulations of doctrine and relating them to one another within a very limited framework. The question of the relation of such knowledge to lived experience was of little importance because assent to propositional truth was vital for salvation. The only relation to 'the Truth' was that of a particular to a universal. The proposition that "God loves all people", invites recognition of being a person and the logical conclusion "therefore, God loves me." There was evidence in the Bible and the influence of kind and generous people who assented to the proposition. Faith was a rational decision and one lived "as if" it were the case, regardless of experience. Indeed, the act of assent, of 'having faith', was purer or more heroic if there was little or no consolation by way of experience when striving to conform oneself to the obligations of being 'in the Truth'.

Of course, there has to be some connection, otherwise belief is nonsensical. In my judgment, the lived reality connecting Christadephians and their faith is "fellowship". One belongs to a group of simple, upright and kind people who provide a sense of security by operating as a large extended family. Such a depth of acceptance and support is rarely found and can be very attractive when discovered. The outward focus emphasising "bible teaching" and "right doctrine" provides a framework for group identity that notionally assures observant members of their relation to God, eternal life, and the world. Discipline concerned with maintaining doctrinal purity ensures a group solidarity necessary to provide such mutual support. Since one's experience is always understood in the light of a tradition in which one has been formed, or has adopted, the benefits of belonging are easily equated with the soundness of the professed beliefs. This leads to tacit agreement not to explore questions that might query those beliefs. If the horizon of understanding is severely limited, and being a person of faith is equated with maintaining that limitation, a circle is completed that encloses the whole of life

and deals with all relevant questions. Other questions are of no real concern or interest or are evidence of 'falling away from the Truth'.

The situation described may be extreme but in my experience the same basic 'spirit' can be found across the broad spectrum of Christian churches. Often I have encountered concern for a 'correct' theological approach that is held to take appropriate account of all necessary factors and considerations. Formal and informal groupings centre around many such 'correct' approaches. Group identities are delineated in terms defining one approach over against opposing views. Certain questions are considered important and others are marginalised as being of little or no concern. To ask them is to betray either ignorance or a leaning toward a position that has been excluded and belongs to the territory of another group. The understanding of being related to God and engaged with theology is primarily through a tradition and a conceptual framework of choice or, as Lonergan once described it, as "substance" rather than "subject".

Eventually, the following questions emerged: What is the connection between human living and relation to God? How does, and how should, theology take account of the human subject? Why does the Church often seem to seek to neglect or supress the subject? Only in more recent years have I begun to understand that answers to such questions are dependent on answers to questions about human understanding and knowing. Thus began the journey that has led to this thesis.

*God guard me from those thoughts men think*

*In the mind alone;*

*He that sings a lasting song*

*Thinks in a marrow-bone.*

W.B. Yeats, from *A Prayer for old Age.*

This, then, brought our new making. Much emotional stress … Call it conversion; but the word can't cover such good. It was like being in love with ambient blessedness ... In love with life transformed … life breathed afresh, though yet half understood. There had been many byways for the frustrate brain, all leading to illusions lost and shrines forsaken … One road is before us now, one guidance for our gain, one morning light – whatever the world's weather – wherein wide-eyed to waken.

Siegfried Sassoon, from *Lenten Illuminations.*

*With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling*

*We shall not cease from exploration*

*And the end of all our exploring*

*Will be to arrive where we started*

*And know the place for the first time.*

T.S. Eliot, from *Little Gidding,* Four Quartets

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# Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the question of understanding the relation of authentic fulfilment in human life to the fulfilment of being in relation to God. For reasons referred to in the Preface, the question has been a particular concern of the writer whose family of origin belonged to an exclusive 'fundamentalist' sect. The writer is dependent on the work of Bernard Lonergan for being introduced to the possibility of knowledge of oneself as a subject and its countless implications for life and theology.

The question at the heart of the thesis is concerned with theology at the level of the vital connection between theological 'answers' and questions arising from lived experience. In daily life and in broad terms, such questions may be experienced as the relation and tension between 'head' and 'heart' or knowing and desiring, 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. The thesis, therefore, involves consideration of a level prior to theological reflection as research and interpretation of scripture and tradition in relation to present questions. Prior to such activity, there is the 'mind' of the theologian, informed and influenced by a tradition, who engages in such reflection desiring to discover answers to questions that further the understanding of Christian faith. Accordingly, the mind's operations in the process of inquiry that leads to knowledge is a major concern of the thesis.

Attention, therefore, is focussed on the human subject. It is argued that it is possible to gain objective knowledge of the subjective operations through which understanding and objective knowledge may be reached. Human knowing may be understood as a related set of acts in the mind that constitute a normative cognitional structure. The operation of intelligence in the subject relates directly and intentionally to the

intelligibility of an object. As a basic premise it may be expressed as an isomorphism between the structure of knowing and the structure of the known.

The human desire for fulfilment of life goes beyond an intellectual desire to know truth and reality to the quest to know and enact the good of true value. Beyond that level, the human spirit desires complete fulfilment in an absolute goodness and unconditional love, which is the quest for God. Religious conversion as a dynamic state of being in love with God is the experiential fulfilment as faith that is given objective expression in the religious beliefs and practices of a tradition. Conversion is understood as foundational for theology.

A contrary view that neglects, or has a truncated view of, the human subject leads to the foundations of theology being understood as in formulations of authoritative teaching. The subject is then invited to understand, believe and obey the precepts contained in conceptual formulations as the means by which they are related to God. Church teaching may be held primarily as ideas or notions rather than expressing a reality known as intimately related to life experience. In human relationships, words become empty formulas if they do not convey a meaning connected to life experience. Similarly, religious beliefs may be held as part of an inherited identity with little understanding or sense of direct connection with life. Human subjects may grow and develop in faith in complete dependence on the authenticity of a tradition but religious beliefs may also be held as mere prejudice resulting in the integrity of a religious tradition being brought into question in the wider community.

When religious conversion is recognised as a major theological reality, theological reflection becomes the consideration of the empirical reality of lived religious faith and its connections with human living can be explored, identified and celebrated. The

chief concern becomes that of addressing the contemporary situation while recognising that theology has a long history, of both development and decline, a tradition from which much can be learned. Theology, as concerned with the understanding of faith, is undertaken in a present context in a manner that addresses current questions while continuing to respect and learn from the heritage of the past. It cannot be undertaken as if it were 'timeless' and consisting of deductions from premises or the application of principles to situations.

The manner of dealing with such questions is greatly influenced by the tradition in which a theologian operates, particularly in regard to what is believed and understood about the recognition and role of authority and authorities in the Church and the operation and distribution of the gifts of the Spirit. The thesis explores the meaning of the term 'authenticity' and its relation to 'conversion'. The question of the authenticity of a tradition and of a theologian is recognised as a major issue, particularly when objective knowledge is recognised as resulting from authentic subjectivity.

The first chapter raises the question of being human and related to God and indicates that answers to the question are dependent on the presuppositions brought to the inquiry. A general introduction to possible presuppositions indicates the necessity of giving attention to questions concerning the human subject as subject and to theology as dependent on God's self-revelation as Love and as mediated through a faith tradition.

The second chapter traces Lonergan's argument in *Verbum*: *Word and Idea in Aquinas* concerning Aquinas' understanding of the role of understanding in coming to know. His judgments on this matter are critical for understanding the basis and importance of the fundamentally opposed conceptualist and intellectualist approaches to human

knowing.  Understanding Aquinas on the operation of intelligence in the mind of the subject in the act of understanding is crucial to grasping meanings intended by Aquinas.  Lonergan's painstaking study provides the historical and theological background that enabled him to distinguish between 'Thomism' and the actual thought of Aquinas, the distinction being that 'Thomism' was a later conceptualist systemization that misunderstood Aquinas' own intellectualist understanding of human knowing.

The third chapter gives examples of conceptualist approaches to theological questions or issues.  They demonstrate that, in neglecting the subject, arguments based on conceptualist premises lead to misunderstandings of both the subject matter and the role of the subjectivity in reaching objectivity.  They are invitations to a truncated self-understanding and issue in attempts to fit the human subject into an ideological mould of misunderstood teaching.

The fourth chapter is concerned with how to begin from the sources of knowledge and be engaged at the source.  It outlines the development of Lonergan's thought on human understanding following his research for *Verbum*.  It indicates that his major works *Insight* and *Method in Theology* are concerned with praxis, with knowing what happens to be the case in the process of cognition and also of religious conversion.  Rather than beginning with a theory about what may or may not be known based on general principles or philosophy, arising from that which is already taken as known, Lonergan begins from reflection on data, the data of consciousness.  He issues an invitation to attend to, and inquire about, the operations of the mind in the movement from inquiry to knowledge that becomes the basis of self-knowledge, both of oneself as a knower and of transcendental method as arising from that knowledge.  The

implications drawn for theological method consist in it being understood as the mediation of a religion to a culture and achieved through functional specialties collaboratively undertaken.

The fifth chapter is concerned with the relation of authentic subjectivity and conversion to theological method. Conversion is shown to be foundational to theology as an on-going calling towards authenticity. It involves an openness to the possible need to re-order priorities and revise understandings. Theological understanding can be presented as connected with that which can be naturally known but as also extending understanding to the realm of transcendence. While conceptual formulation of beliefs and their moral consequences is essential, such formulations are easily misused and misapplied when the context in which they emerged is neglected and they are treated as infinite truth rather than finite truth.

The sixth chapter summarises and draws some conclusions on the basis of the positions reached in the previous chapters.

# Chapter One

##  Being Human, Authenticity and Theology

### *1.1  A theological inquiry into being human and related to God*

In its broadest form, the question motivating this thesis is, "How, in the light of Christian faith, can we understand human beings as capable of relationship with God?" This vast question is given more distinct focus by concentrating on the capacities of knowing and desiring (or loving) as central to being human and Christian. Fundamental to human life is the desire for knowledge, the good, and for loving relationships, and fulfilment is experienced insofar as they are achieved.  Christian faith, in making truth claims and identifying God as the absolute source of love and goodness, professes that ultimate fulfilment is found in being related to God through Jesus Christ and the Gift of the Spirit.  The basic human predicament is understood to be that, despite our best efforts, the unaided human condition is such as to make complete fulfilment impossible.  Religious conversion creates new possibilities through experience of the Gift of God's love and its healing and transforming power. The basic question, therefore, is 'How are the means that constitute the conditions of the possibility of fulfilment in human life related to the conditions that make relationship with God humanly possible?'  Methods of approach to dealing with such a question, or of eliminating it as a non-question, are of central importance.

In regard to human knowing, refinement of the topic is achieved by a particular focus on two basic and opposed standpoints concerning the role of concepts in the process of cognition.  Simply put, either *concepts* are regarded as the basis of understanding and knowledge or *understanding* is regarded as prior to, and the basis of, concepts and knowledge.  The former 'conceptualist' standpoint is the present common 'default position' of the vast majority of people and, as such, is often simply assumed.

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Concepts are regarded as the basic units of knowledge, derived initially from the senses, and understanding, or being intelligent, becomes a matter of grasping connections or relations between concepts.  In contrast, to assert the priority of understanding is to affirm that the human mind grasps intelligibility in data through an operation of intelligence that is pre-conceptual.  Intelligence in act, as an inner 'formulating', gives rise to the 'formulation' of concepts, definitions or hypotheses. Since the origins of knowing are held to be intellectual activity, the approach can be called *intellectualist*.  The importance of the distinction between conceptualist and intellectualist approaches for understanding the relation of the human subject and method in theology is a major theme of this work.

For understanding the intellectualist approach, and for discovery of the fundamental importance of knowledge of oneself as a knower, this thesis is gratefully indebted to the work of Bernard Lonergan.  The thesis aims to clarify understanding of the conditions of the possibility of becoming an authentic subject, created in the image of God and in loving relation to God, and to indicate the implications of such an understanding for theologians and theological method.

## 1.2 Presuppositions

All inquiry inevitably begins with presuppositions.  This thesis presupposes and argues for two starting points for theological inquiry. The first begins from God's self-revelation as Love and the Gift of faith, whereas the second begins from the human capacity for knowing and desiring or loving.

Firstly, it presupposes that theological inquiry commences from a basis of faith, understood as a Gift of God's love that has both subjective and objective implications. Faith is received as a gift because it is wholly dependent on God's gracious self-

revelation as Love that is prior to any human response, and the term 'God' refers to a transcendent reality beyond direct human comprehension. Faith is subjective and relational as *belief in* God, a response of personal commitment to, and love of, God whose love for us is revealed definitively in the person of Jesus Christ and received through the Holy Spirit. Faith also has objective content as *belief that* the basic judgments of fact and value affirmed by the Church are true. History bears witness to various understandings of such basic judgments and to a variety of forms of religious expression that have become data for theological reflection.

The faith of the Church, in its various expressions, is the primary starting point for theological reflection because love and knowledge of God involves incorporation into a community of faith. Evidence for the primacy of the Church in the matter of knowledge of the faith is found in the basic consistency in the affirmations made in creeds and confessions maintained over centuries. An underlying consistency can be affirmed while acknowledging some serious disagreements on particular issues and the many varying levels of certitude, harmony and unity about their contemporary meaning and relevance. As with other world religions, that which unifies belief as identifiably 'Christian' is far greater than the differences resulting from disagreement on particular issues.

The history of theological reflection in the Church has been one of responding and adapting to new circumstances and questions. Authentic development in understanding Christian faith and its implications has been recognised as possible and necessary. It is illustrated in the on-going process of theological reflection beginning with the early Church's development from a group within Judaism to a cross-cultural movement gradually standardizing its practices, organizational structure and doctrinal

positions. Alongside such development, there has been continuing witness to a necessary caution about the role of theology, because Christian faith is not the result of being convinced by logical argument. God is always beyond human comprehension, a 'mystery' known through love or, as the title of the spiritual classic states, through a 'cloud of unknowing'. Faith, as a lived reality, originates as 'reasons of the heart', a transformation or conversion in response to an immediate experience of the Gift of God's love in which ultimate value is discerned as evoking and enabling our loving response.

While subjectively and relationally resulting from the Gift of God's love, faith may also be objectified as knowledge received through love that invites our assent. Such knowledge differs from ordinarily acquired knowledge both in its origin and the manner of its attainment. To discuss, purely as a matter of rational argument, the question of the existence of God usually means that the possible 'God' under discussion is a hypothesis about an ultimate intelligent ground of being. Such reasoning can only conclude to abstract notions about God in relation to the universe.[1] A Christian theological response to the question of God depends on God's self-revelation for knowledge of God. Reason is employed to understand such knowledge in relation to the naturally known and to reflect on its implications for life. Theology, therefore, begins in the mystery of God revealed as unrestricted Love and its participation in a community of faith, which has a history in which its knowledge of that love is conveyed through successive generations.

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[1] An example is Paul Davies, *The Mind of God; Science and the Search for Ultimate Meaning;* London; Penguin Books, 1992, for which the author received the Templeton Prize for religion in 1995. From a theological perspective, given the title, it is astonishing that the word 'love' does not occur in the work. The sub-title eliminates any surprise by indicating that he is responding to Stephen Hawking.

The second starting point of this inquiry regards the human capacities of knowing and loving. A theological approach 'from above' is sometimes understood as excluding the possibility of any valid contribution to theology arising 'from below'. This position was exemplified in the work of Karl Barth who concluded that, because faith and salvation are entirely God's work, theology had nothing to learn from the use of reason as applied in philosophy or any of the sciences. In his view, use of such reason in the past had resulted in the importation of alien principles that had distorted Christian theology.[2] One such major 'alien' principle is the idea of the possibility of effective human cooperation with grace through the capacities of knowing and loving. For Barth, human worth and dignity is not immanent and demonstrable but an object of faith. It consists in what is given or created by God's Word. True freedom and fulfilment is found solely through the action of God's Word in moving the will to believe and act in accordance with the good for which it is intended.[3] Faith, therefore, does not integrate with or enable something already in the human being but is created solely by act of God.

Contrary to Barth, this inquiry seeks to demonstrate a necessary place for a theological approach from 'below' on the basis that faith, as a response of love to God's self-revelation as Love, necessarily - and in practice – involves assent, love, trust, commitment and understanding. How such 'natural' human responses and acts may be understood as related to the 'supernatural' is the major question to be addressed.

If there were no 'cognitive circuit' from God's self-revelation as Love to human knowing, theology itself would be impossible. Faith would refer to mystical

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[2] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume 1 Part 1*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley and T. Torrance, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975). 6-9
[3] Barth, *Dogmatics 1/1*. iii, 40f, 168f, 243f.

experience without knowable content and theology, if attempted at all, could only be a form of speculative rationalism. All that would be possible is the empirical study of the history, beliefs, practices and effects of religion. While important for history, anthropology and sociology, such studies are not theology, although they may provide data for theological reflection. Christian theology, as the classic description of it as 'faith seeking understanding' indicates, involves intelligent reflection on the meaning and implications of Christian faith in God. While presupposing faith, it also presupposes that faith has an objectifiable content that may be affirmed as true and understood in relation to other knowledge. The thesis, therefore, will attend to questions about what is involved in coming to know, knowing by belief, knowing by religious belief through love and the relation of knowing to desiring and loving. It is foundational to the question of the relation of faith and reason, for there are different approaches to understanding those terms that affect the meaning of the conjunction 'and' when placed between them. John Paul II began his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* by using an image:

> Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. Ex 33:18, Ps 27:8-9, 63:2-3, Jn 14:8, 1 Jn 3:2).[4]

This thesis is concerned with understanding the connecting *et* between *fides* and *ratio* so that they form 'two wings'. It will be argued that another *et* is required, between *fides* and *ratio* to clarify understanding of how the human spirit might soar to knowledge of God. That additional *et* must refer to intellectual and relational aspects of being human; to what is meant, in ordinary parlance, by that which takes place in

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[4] Pope John Paul II, *Fides Et Ratio* (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls Puiblications, 1998). 9.

the 'mind' and 'heart'. The perspective may be stated as that of *Fides et (Mens et Cor) et Ratio*.

*Fides et Ratio* continues a long history of theological reflection that has sought to correlate faith and reason by regarding faith *both* as the response to God's self-revelation as Love in Christ *and* as the conditions that make human response possible. *Fides et Ratio* has roots in the influence of classical Greek philosophy on the thought of Christian theologians over much of the formative history of the Church. *Logos* was the term used to refer both to God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ, and to the intelligible order of the universe. This led to the fundamental notion that God could never be understood as acting contrary to *logos*.[5] It was impossible to conceive God as self-contradictory or arbitrary but only as the perfection of truth, goodness and love.

Operating from that basis, the most influential theological approaches, in the Western Church, to the question of understanding the conditions of the possibility of human relation to God were those of Augustine in the fifth century and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth. By contemporary standards, fifth or thirteenth century knowledge was very limited or even spurious, and mediaeval scholastic metaphysics has been rendered obsolete by advances in knowledge. Reading medieval theologians today can lead to the assumption that they were much more concerned with abstract ideas than with the concrete realities of human living. Their mental 'horizon' did not include the contemporary suspicion about a gap between ideas and reality that language attempts to bridge. Words expressing a correct understanding were understood to refer directly

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[5] Benedict XVI in a lecture at Regensberg described this link as "an event of decisive importance" and briefly outlined the reasons that have contributed to its having been under threat. BenedictXVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections," Liberia Editrice Vaticana, www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/September/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensberg_en.html.

to reality and thus, they were realists. This inquiry aims to demonstrate that the basic approach of Thomas Aquinas, as explained and developed in the work of Bernard Lonergan, has a major contribution to make to contemporary theology and an understanding of our fundamental identity as human and related to God.

Conclusions drawn as a result of the engagement of faith and reason, of theology with philosophy or any of various sciences, are always open to the Barthian charge that theology is then always distorted or contaminated by the constraints of an imposed theoretical framework. The basis of the approach 'from below' to be explored here is one that is prior to all theories and conclusions. It concerns the subjective conditions involved in all human knowing and the relation of knowing to loving. If relation to God is to be understood as the fulfilment of human knowing and loving rather than their overthrow or subversion, an understanding of the conditions of the possibility of the human response to the grace of God requires an understanding of knowing and loving. Accepting that the first qualifying phrase of the previous sentence needs to be justified, the starting point 'from below' in this thesis is human knowing and its intentional relation to reality and its relation to desiring or loving.

### 1.3  The wider present context of the inquiry

The question of our fundamental identity as human is not a theological question only. It arises in a context where uncertainty or crisis about the meaning of being human is pervasive in Western culture. The widespread collapse of collectivist ways of understanding humanity in the last quarter of the twentieth century has resulted in greater dominance of individualist understandings. For many, a fragmentation of the sense of self has occurred as it becomes increasingly difficult to give expression to the unity of the person experiencing the transitions between various roles played in the many divisions and sub-divisions of contemporary life. The age-old questions, "Who

am I?" and "What is the purpose of life?" resonate as strongly as ever in an early twenty-first century Australian context. Regarded primarily as consumers living in an economy, we are offered a multiplicity of choices that often seem to serve as distractions from serious engagement with personal, social and political questions. A general 'busyness' of life is experienced that does not allow time for reflective questioning or nourishment of the inner self or 'soul'.

While there are commonly accepted assumptions about the sanctity of life or the intrinsic rights and dignity of human beings, the basis of such assumptions is often unclear or tenuous. Belief in humanism, as an idea of inherent dignity based simply on being human, has been shaken. Ideologies that promised fulfilment through education, science and technological progress, or social revolution have evidently failed. Rather like religious belief, humanism has retreated to the realm of the personal and private. In recent years, the 'war on terror' has dominated world politics and resulted in an erosion of previously accepted human 'rights'. Torture of alleged terrorists has been justified on pragmatic grounds. Australian Governments have sought to justify offshore 'detention' (in practice, indistinguishable from 'imprisonment') of asylum seekers and their children, as necessary and 'humane'. Critics have judged it as cruel and oppressive because desperate human beings are used as a means for short-term political ends that are determined by fear and ignorance. A world-view, that is essentially reductionist, materialist and pragmatic, has become so pervasive that a public language for discussion of issues that cannot be quantified is largely lacking. What is it about being human that is of inalienable value, and frequently asserted in terms of 'rights', but is rarely understood and appears to be increasingly under threat? Can Christian theological reflection contribute to public discourse through reflection on the connection between the human relation to God and what it is to be human? It is

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the belief of the Church that its true life has a universal context and is a source of freedom and hope for individuals and societies. A Christian understanding of the world situation will be expressed in terms of the loving purpose of God to renew creation and bring all to fulfilment. What connection does such a faith and hope make with human reason and its application to the wider questions that trouble the world?

Classically, Christian theological reflection on being human has centred on the *imago Dei*, the belief that human beings are made in the image of God.[6] As created in the image of God, human beings have been understood to possess a dignity or worth unique amongst creatures. Human life is no mere accident but sacred: a participation in some way in something attributed solely to God. Reflection on the 'some way' and 'something' of the *imago Dei* is central to this thesis. Such reflection is itself undertaken in a wider context in which evolutionary theorists are confident that the 'mind', as the capacity for cognitional and moral judgment, will soon be demonstrated to be the product of natural evolutionary processes. The last refuge of a religious approach to being human based on an immaterial 'soul' or 'mind' would then be exposed to the same kind of critique that Charles Darwin's work inspired in the nineteenth century in relation to the physical world. Mind would be understood as an epiphenomenon, something that only appears to have reality in itself but is the result of the phenomena of 'natural' brain activity. It would invite the conclusion, summarised in a *Nature* editorial as follows: "With all deference to the sensibilities of religious

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[6] Genesis 1:26-31 is the first account of the creation of humankind and includes the well-known reference to humans being created in the image of God. The passage occurs in the context of mythological accounts (Genesis 1-11) that tell the ancient stories of the essential goodness and harmony of creation and also account for the present human condition of disruption of relation to God and one another. This disruption is portrayed as the experience of chaos rather than created order, both individually and collectively, and is a consequence of the self-aggrandisement of attempts to be 'as God' rather than acceptance of being human and in relation to God.

people, the idea that man was created in the image of God can surely be put aside."[7]

The question as to whether an evolutionary understanding of the origin and development of the brain is such that "the idea that man was created in the image of God can surely be put aside" is a question to be addressed later in the larger context of the possibility of immaterial reality. The term 'mind' is used in this thesis with its common meaning of denoting human mental or intellectual capacities and activity, including judgments of value in appreciation of the good.

## 1.4 Theology and the human mind

There are two common modes of self-experience. The first is the experience of being alive as an embodied self, active, as in walking or speaking, and passive or receptive, as in hearing. The second is the inner experience of self-consciousness, of being puzzled, desiring the good, intending something, and is the experience that evokes the term 'mind'. The inner experience of mind is undeniable despite its reality being under question, as mentioned above. Its relevance to theology is that theology is indisputably the product of human minds asking and responding to questions.[8]

The mind reflecting theologically may operate from the basis of dogma and Church teaching or it may reflect on questions that arise from experience and seek understanding in the light of Church teaching. Theology pursued as rational argument about the meaning of terms and their relations is an approach that systematically excludes the subject. It divorces theology from life and spirituality, often inciting the disdain of the faithful with descriptions such as 'satellite theology' - "up in the air, going round in circles, try and bring it down to earth and it disintegrates". Theology

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[7] Editorial, "Evolution and the Brain," *Nature* 447, no. 7146 (2007), www.nature.com/nature/journal/v447/n7146/index.html#ed.

[8] "theologies are produced by theologians, .. theologians have minds and use them, .. their doing so should not be ignored or passed over but explicitly acknowledged in itself and its implications." Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1972). 25.

has to be 'earthed' and contemporary if it is to be a lively source for communication of faith. Real questions are be taken seriously and addressed in the context of understanding their origin and history and in relation to the tradition of faith.

A prime historical example of Christian theological creativity in response to questions is found in the long series of theological arguments, from the second to the fifth centuries, that resulted in the classic expressions of Christian faith in God as Holy Trinity affirmed in the ecumenical creeds. The long, slow process of arriving at an adequate understanding was one in which it is possible to trace the developments that led to the emergence of dogma.[9] Questions arose that generated possible answers that became the subject of debate and further questions. Necessarily, because human minds were at work, terminology and thought forms available at the time were used and adapted. Only after generations of periodic argument and intense dispute, was the Church able to formulate affirmations about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit that were held to be both consistent with the witness of Scripture and adequate to the experience of living as a Christian in the Church and the world. The defining of the canon of Scripture is also an example of human minds coming to a judgment in response to a question that required a consistent answer.

Only as questions arose about understanding the relation of Jesus Christ to God, or of the status of early Christian texts, were answers required. When questions stretched the Church beyond the capacity of previously accepted positions to provide satisfactory answers, as in 'Greek' questions being asked of texts embodying Jewish culture, new forms of expression were required to adequately address them. Answers

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[9] For an analysis of the arguments involved in the emergence and development of dogma up to the Council of Nicea, see Lonergan, *The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology*, trans. Conn O'Donovan (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1976).

to new questions were understood to be in continuity with past affirmations while allowing for necessary development to address a new situation. The Creeds of the fourth to the sixth centuries represent the transposition of the understanding of the content of revelation to a new set of categories in response to further questions and, according to the Church, do so definitively. Any further understandings, made necessary through further questions arising in later historical and cultural situations, are required to demonstrate continuity with the affirmations of the Creeds.

Since arrival at a new understanding occurs in human minds, it invites inquiry into the process by which questioning leads to answers. Such an inquiry raises a set of questions including how knowing takes place, the relation of 'mind' to the senses, of the subject to an object, the use of imagination, and, most importantly, *how* answers to such questions are to be discovered. To adopt a position in response to such questions is foundational because it determines the horizon within which questions arise and answers are sought and recognised as knowledge.

Once again, the point is reached that every Christian theological enterprise that attempts to speak about the relation of human beings to God has, beside its dependence on faith and revelation, a basis in an understanding of human knowing. Because the operations of the mind are central to theology, in order to know anything at all, understanding and knowledge of what is involved in those operations should contribute to reflection on the practice of theology. A central concern, therefore, is with the effect on her theology of a theologian's knowledge of her own knowing and loving.

Self-knowledge is a notoriously difficult area because subjectivity cannot wholly be objectified. It is impossible to reach the vantage point of the pure thinking subject, the

abstraction of a point without extension, because we are always involved in our knowing. The essential subjectivity involved in knowing has been a constant puzzle. Michael Polanyi came to the conclusion that, because all knowing involves an essential personal dimension, the commonly held view that scientific knowledge is impersonal and totally objective is a myth. He identified knowing as always involving a "tacit dimension" in which a subjective apprehension or indwelling of particulars enables the understanding necessary to arrive at knowledge of an entity that comprises them.[10] This personal dimension involved in all knowing is 'tacit', and remains so for Polanyi, because, although essential, it is not adverted to in the actual process of coming to know. In his view, attempts to do so only interfere with and disable the process.

The following sections, drawing on the work of Bernard Lonergan, introduce the question of how explicit and objective self-knowledge of human knowing is possible, and how it forms the basis of understanding human consciousness as 'intentional'.

## 1.5  Knowing and Loving

At the practical and common sense level of ordinary living, one lives with confidence that knowledge of reality is possible. It is recognised that what is apprehended in the mind, through the occurrence of insights that are able to be verified, is 'true' or 'real'. Part of common sense knowledge is that the necessary connection in knowing is made in the mind, which is associated with the head since common sense has absorbed the notion of the brain as the centre of mental activity. The cartoon depiction of an illuminated light globe, over the head, reflects such a basic understanding.

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[10] Polanyi's understanding of his position as applied to faith and reason is given in Michael Polanyi, "Faith and Reason," *Journal of Religion* 41, no. 4 (1961). His major work is Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge; Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1958).

Western culture has tended to regard the connection established through loving and desiring as occurring through the heart, even though it may be acknowledged that feelings and emotions are actually recorded in the brain. The common sense distinction between 'head' and 'heart' recognises that disjunction between them may be keenly felt and become the cause of difficulty and self-reflection. Pure rationality seems to be devoid of the sense of life while the energetic responsiveness of desiring may be recognised as powerful but irrational. As useful as such insights are for everyday communication, they are solely concerned with immediate and practical effects and do not attempt to understand the tension between knowing and desiring. Common sense is a constant reminder that understanding of knowing and loving must begin with, and be verified by, experience. In this thesis, the starting point for inquiry into the relation of knowing and loving within the unity of consciousness that constitutes human life will be *praxis*: what *de facto* happens to be the case in the experience of coming to know and to love.

At the level of theory, the long history of philosophy may be regarded as a series of attempts to answer questions about knowing and loving from a variety of starting points. In recent centuries the spectacular success of scientific method in advancing human knowledge has led to the notion that it is the only known valid means to discover objective truth. Science, rather than philosophy, may supply answers to questions about our fundamental identity. Its very success indicates that much may be learned from the application of scientific method. It requires that any hypothesis must be validated by experimental results. Ideally, an inquirer is open to the possibility that an hypothesis under consideration is correct or incorrect. While an inquirer may have a strong belief that a particular hypothesis is true, it would be a denial of scientific method to ignore or rule out data that does not support the hypothesis. Scientists being

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human, there may be internal or external pressure to reach specific conclusions that may result in a tendency to discredit data that does not support an inquirer's expectations, while data that does agree with those expectations may not be checked as carefully. While this may occur, the checks and balances of the method in the scientific community are designed to expose such errors. The positive lessons of scientific method for the enduring temptations of theological inquiry are clear. All data must be handled in the same way and it is very important to be clear as to the criteria for judging what constitutes relevant data and is necessary for verifying hypotheses.

Is it possible that research into neural activity and biochemical processes can provide an explanation of the cognitive, emotional and moral aspects that appear to distinguish humans from other beings? If a materialist or mechanistic view of reality is adopted, testing the hypothesis would be a matter of analysing whatever is considered to be the basic constituent elements enabling brain function. Rather than considering the question from the larger perspective of a functioning mind, what we are would be an aggregate of the data discovered through description and explanation of the 'how' of the activities traced in the brain. The question 'why' would have to be addressed in terms of biological and evolutionary imperatives. Such a schema does not admit the possibility of immaterial reality. In contrast, a religious standpoint will insist on it, and will maintain that to analyse physical, neural and biochemical activity is to describe only the means by which larger 'realities', such as mind or life, are made evident, rather than providing a full explanatory account. On the personal level, experience of the liveliness experienced in the surge of feelings in response to perceived value, particularly in falling in love, but also in laughter at getting the joke or participation in family, community or team 'spirit', is an indicator of a 'spiritual' dimension of being

human requiring further investigation. In the history of human endeavour, in culture, art and sciences, in its greatness and destructiveness, there is operative some 'spirit' or mind or 'soul' for good and evil that has to be acknowledged. If the notion of immaterial reality is not to be caricatured as a "ghost in the machine", a basis of its reasonableness as operative in and through the material is required.[11]

For an exploration of the operation and reality of the mind, this thesis draws on work of Bernard Lonergan and particularly his major work, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*.[12] It is primarily an invitation to self-discovery of the subjective operations constitutive of human understanding and knowing. While it can be read as a theory of cognitional process, an epistemology and an outline of a basis for metaphysics, ethics and transcendent knowledge, Lonergan was insistent that understanding his work was essentially a matter of a self-discovery. Assent to the propositional statements is possible only through a self-knowledge gained from attending to, and reflecting upon, the occurrence of insights in the process of coming to know. He asks whether our basic assumptions about knowing equate with our actual experience of coming to know. Lonergan was well aware that an understanding of knowing that depends entirely on self-discovery of the operations involved cannot be approached simply as a logical argument. His purpose in inviting attention to the subjective operations of the 'mind' is to indicate that, when objectified as data of consciousness, such operations can be understood in a similar manner to the data of sense. Self-knowledge, for Lonergan, is thus based on praxis, as befits a science of the human.

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[11] The phrase originates with Ryle's influential critique of Cartesian dualism of intellectual mind and mechanical body. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Peregrine, 1963).
[12] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. S.J. and R.M. Doran F.E. Crowe, 5th ed., vol. 3 CWL (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

The further question of the relation between knowing and loving arises in many ways. Everyday chat refers to the 'head' and 'heart' and practical advice on resolving tension between them may be sought. On the level of theory, philosophical treatises are written on the relation of intellect and emotions[13] and, from a psychological perspective, explanations are proposed that relate desire and rationality in ways designed to facilitate human relationships and promote mental health.

The felt tension in all such endeavour is that between being reasonable and responsible in our judging and deciding and the immediate dynamic thrust of desiring, of a heightened sense of being alive, as feelings respond to perceived value. Human life is much more than cognition or rationality, but understanding of the desiring that seeks fulfilment and contributes to the 'much more' of life is often elusive. This is exemplified in the way that rationalisations are recognised as ineffectual attempts to use reason to justify judgments of value expressed in questionable decisions and actions. Further, the experience of being in love is not simply a matter of reasonable and responsible judgment. It does not arise from what we come to know but, more fundamentally, from what we are. On reflection, it may be possible to identify and understand contributing factors but in the midst of the experience such analysis is impossible. Over time, our decisions and actions constitute our life or 'self' through the interests pursued, the values affirmed and the habits formed. Being intelligent and educated is not, in itself, a guarantee of wise decisions or actions in accord with what is understood to constitute true value. 'Conversion' is the term that has been used in

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[13] A notable example is Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought; the Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For a different approach see Andrew Tallon, *Head and Heart: Affection, Cognition, Volition as Triune Consciousness* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997). A common sense approach to the question of their relation in respect to public life in Australia is provided in Graham Little, *The Public Emotions: From Mourning to Hope.* (Sydney, NSW.: ABC Books, 1999).

Christian theology to denote the requirement, at the fundamental level of what we are, of bringing our knowing and desiring into harmony.

If it were possible to reach the basis of self-knowledge as a concrete contingent knower, decider and lover, a basis shared by all people, it would be possible to identify a trans-cultural basis of being human that could be methodically argued and assessed. That basis would become the foundation for all knowing that is the product of human minds. However theoretical its form of expression, such knowing would have a praxeological basis by arising out of reflection on the actual experience of cognitional operations.

The thesis will concentrate on the basic question of the concrete operative presuppositions about reality, objectivity and knowing that are present in the theologian and their determinative effect on theology. For Lonergan, commonly accepted assumptions on such matters in Western culture are mistaken and nothing less than a massive cultural shift, based on an intellectual conversion, is required for them to change. Lonergan's account of the difficulties of intellectual conversion indicates that they arise, fundamentally, from understanding the transitions involved in the process of human development from infancy to adult, from a world of immediacy to a world mediated by meaning and value. His invitation is for us to identify, and appropriate, a pattern of related subjective operations that constitute a basic and invariant structure of human knowing.

The self-appropriation of our basic human identity as knowers dynamically oriented toward fulfilment through cognitive self-transcendence, is the basis of a 'minding' of our 'minds', of a move toward interiority and the analysis of intentionality. To know ourselves as knowers and lovers oriented to moral and religious self-transcendence is

to reach self-knowledge which Lonergan in *Insight* termed "rational self-consciousness".[14]   Later, he was to describe the many levels of consciousness that constitute the human being as knowing, desiring and loving as

> successive stages in the unfolding of a single thrust, the eros of the human spirit.  To know the good, it must know the real; to know the real, it must know the true; to know the true, it must know the intelligible; to know the intelligible, it must attend to the data.[15]

A basic pattern of intentional operations is the dynamic basis of a self-constituting and self-assembling structure of conscious intentionality that is capable of being known.

## 1.6  Theology of the head and heart

The tension between 'head' and 'heart' is evident theologically in the uneasy relation between 'theology' concerned with the objective content of Christian faith and 'spirituality' that studies the lived experience of Christian faith.  It raises the question of the purpose or function of theology.  The relation between theology and spirituality has changed over the centuries with the present era being one in which spirituality is of far more general interest than theology.  Schneiders states that "theology was articulate spirituality and spirituality was lived theology" until the thirteenth century in the West.[16]  She identifies the relocation of the study of theology from the monasteries to the universities as marking the beginning of a separation of spirituality from theology.

The establishment of universities in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries came at a time of increasing commerce and communication, when new ideas were circulating and intellectual activity was stimulated through contact with Jewish and Islamic

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[14] *Insight,* 636-638.
[15] *Method*, 13.
[16] Sandra M. Schneiders, "Christian Spirituality: Definition, Methods and Types," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005). 2.

scholars.[17]  An increase of intellectual activity coincided with a renewal of religious life expressed in the rise of mendicant orders.  Access to Aristotle and his Arabic commentators resulted, within a short time, in Aristotle being regarded simply as 'The Philosopher'.  Reason began to signify not only logic but also empirical observation and experiment.  Inevitably, as truths of faith were increasingly subject to new forms of inquiry, theologians sought to address questions in terms appropriate to the times.

This led to a heightened tension between reason and faith and dispute about an appropriate theological response.  There was resistance and opposition to the teaching of Aristotle by Church authorities very wary of a pagan philosopher being treated with such respect.  The discovery of natural laws and assertion of the value of the knowledge of nature in its own right seemed to diminish, or threaten to usurp, the sovereignty of God.  The sciences and philosophy had been understood to have value only in so far as they provided examples to further one's knowledge of God and thus were regarded as purely ancillary to the science of theology.[18]

Thomas Aquinas responded to the challenge to provide a coherent integration of Church teaching with the new approaches to understanding the natural world stimulated by the rediscovery of Aristotle.[19]  Aristotelian influence enabled him to accept a real and full distinction between theology and philosophy and the sciences while also maintaining that truth known by reason and revealed truth cannot be contradictory because all truth has its source in God.

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[17] An overview is provided by Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume 2 Part I*, Image Books, ed. (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1962). 187-190, 211-246.

[18] For a summary account that explains the central issue as the refusal of the Dominicans (principally Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas) to subordinate philosophy to theology, see Yves Congar, *A History of Theology*, trans. S.J. H. Guthrie (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc, 1968). 91-122.

[19] A comprehensive introduction to the historical background and work of Aquinas may be found in J-P. Torrell, *St. Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 1, the Person and His Work.*, trans. R. Royal (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1996).

As the task of theologians became increasingly understood as more 'scientific' than 'spiritual', the distinctions between theology and philosophy, the natural sciences and spirituality eventually became separations. The separation was unforeseen and resulted in an academic discipline of theology that eventually became largely concerned with demonstrating the truths of faith as certain and necessary. Such a realm of abstract ideas was far removed from lived faith expressed in devotion and praxis.

Estrangement between reasoned argument about the meaning and content of Christian faith and reflection on the experience of lived faith is lamentable as an impoverishment of both. For Christian faith, God's self-revelation is centred in the Word made flesh, a Word that reveals the likeness of God in human form. It is on this basis that faith can find self-expression by means of 'word' and reason. Without such a 'Word', the only possible expression of faith would be silence before mystery. Further, God cannot be an object of knowledge in the sense of an object that can be empirically observed, but only as the content of an object of thought or what is intended. From the human perspective, God is a question that arises from the questioning of questioning itself.[20] From the point of view of Christian faith, God is subject in that the love of God is given to us. Love of God is a relation to the source of Love prior to any objectification and, therefore, is a relation of subject to subject. Such love of God, and relation to God as subject, can be objectified as an object of thought. The difference between conceiving God as an object and the objectification of the relation to God as subject is the difference between a purely rational approach to the question of God and an approach from the basis of faith and religious experience. While theology may use the former approach, the specifically theological approach in regard to content is the latter.

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[20] *Method,* 101-103

The objectification of the relation to God as subject is expressed through stories, symbols, images and ritual in the community of faith. Such descriptive and evocative modes of expression engage the whole person and have always been the primary means of communication about the human relation to God. When questions arise that require an explanation of the meaning of the content of belief, a shift to a different mode of expression is required. An explanatory account that attempts to state the cognitive meaning of some aspect of belief in God must resort to the use of analogy within a framework of theory. The role of theory in theology will be further discussed in the next section.

Data for theological reflection includes individual experience but extends far beyond it to the history of the Christian experience of relation to God, expressed in Scripture, debated, understood and defined by the Church and conveyed in the lives of believers. The data includes both evocative stories and symbols as well as more theoretical understandings, such as the doctrine of the Trinity.[21] Understanding of the real life drama of ultimate fulfilment in personal and communal relation to God is the aim of theology. An understanding of the content of faith is part of that aim. The central theological question of relation to God, therefore, is one that is lived with or into or, even, away from. Theologians are directly involved, self-implicated, in their theology. Convictions about knowing and loving God through being known and loved by God, and about human knowing and loving, are foundational in the articulation of theology.

Attempts can be made to evade the question of self-implication by setting it aside to concentrate solely on what others have said about God. Theology could then be held

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[21] The reference to 'theory' here denotes approaches that went beyond narrative and symbols to the use of interrelated terms to express the Church's understanding of the content of belief. It may be regarded as theory at the level of the times. The issue will be taken up in the next section 1.7.

to consist in analysis and commentary on the use of concepts and ideas by theologians. While research and interpretation forms part of the theological task, at some point it becomes necessary to make a statement or take a stand on an issue. There comes a time when theology goes beyond research and interpretation and is something to be said and done. Otherwise theology becomes a peddling of information, a regurgitation of other people's thoughts from one's own viewpoint, as understanding the mystery of God. If personal convictions are not acknowledged, they are carried as a sub-text that influences or determines conclusions. They will also have influenced any prior research and interpretation of history and contemporary arguments. There is a whole complex of factors at work in human lives and societies that make objectivity in studies involving the decisions and actions of human beings far more difficult than in the natural sciences.

The question that arises for theology is how the process of reflection can be anything other than a reflection determined by personal or group convictions. Is there a basis or norm for theology that could issue in a method that advances beyond selective quotation and rhetorical argument on the basis of prior suppositions? It will become evident that Lonergan's view is that the foundations of theological method lie in the cognitional structure present in the human mind and in the threefold (religious, moral and intellectual) conversion of the theologian. Conversion, at the intellectual level, is understood as issuing in knowledge of oneself as a knower.

What, then, of the relation between theology and spirituality? Spirituality keeps theology to its vocation and prevents the evasion of its real object. While it does not answer questions seeking explanations about the relation to God, it prevents reason from being concerned only with theoretical abstractions. It provides the orientation or

perspective within which the question of relation to God remains a question that is being asked rather than evaded. At the same time, theology is necessary for spirituality. Non-theological spirituality easily becomes lost in experience and a cult of devotion or devotedness. An emphasis on subjectivity and feelings can result in questions about cognitive meaning being excluded and a lack of concern for objective truth. The distinction between theology and spirituality ought not to be a total separation because they are different perspectives on one reality. Distinction is for the purpose of understanding that reality in the contemporary cultural milieu. Only in the union of theology and spirituality is there life, passion, and spiritual value in theology and substance, meaning, and truth in spirituality.

Lonergan's work in theology was mainly devoted toward the development of a method for theology that would meet the need of the contemporary situation. In Lonergan's assessment, that need was one in which culture would be regarded empirically and account would be taken of the achievements of scientific method, and the historical nature of all forms of theological expression. He had been involved in teaching theology in a period (1940-64) prior to Vatican II "in which the situation I was in was hopelessly antiquated, but had not yet been demolished".[22] The notion of theology within which he had operated resulted from a 'classicist' worldview and was based on deductions within a metaphysical framework. As such, it was not able to adequately address the empirically based approach characterising contemporary science and scholarship. Classicist methodology needed to be replaced if theology was to

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[22] Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan*, ed. W.F.J. Ryan and B.J Tyrell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975). 212. Lonergan's appraisal of the needs of theology and, in particular Catholic theology, is well summarised in Matthew Ogilvie, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, ed. Andrew Tallon, vol. 26, Marquette Studies in Theology (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002). 22-46.

communicate in the contemporary world, functioning as a mediator between faith and culture rather than speaking to itself and sidelined from contemporary questions and debate. A method was required that had empirical foundations and was able to account for its own methods and for the theologian who undertakes the task. For Lonergan, method based on objective knowledge of the subjective operations involved in the process of cognition meets those requirements. As an interrelated pattern, the operations are held to constitute a cognitional structure that becomes the inner foundation from which knowing and loving are understood.

It will become evident that such a methodical basis for theology proposes that there are functionally related levels of consciousness in our identity as human. Our presuppositions at the cognitive level lead directly to assumptions at the moral level of decision and action, and those assumptions contribute to presumptions at the level of loving and religious experience. It also works the other way, assumptions at the level of religion affect our moral presuppositions and, in turn, our assumptions about knowing.

A major contrasting approach to understanding human knowing begins from placing conception before understanding and valuing the clarity and precision of conceptual or logical knowing as demonstrated in mathematics and the sciences.[23] Systematic understanding is made possible by drawing logical conclusions of the necessary from interlocking sets of defined terms and relations and such reasoning becomes the mode of knowing. The basic question of knowing is how to account for the connection between thought (or mind) and external reality. One explanation proceeds on the

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[23] The sciences, of course, begin with data and conclude with verification by experiment. Here I refer to the importance attached to logic in the process of reasoning to conclusions about the intelligibility of data.

analogy that knowing is like seeing an object. As the human subject perceives external objects by the senses, so knowing is an operation that involves looking at what is out there to be seen, making connections between concepts that appear spontaneously in the mind and verifying those connections. This intuitive theory of knowing characterises the many forms of empiricism where the real is what is out there to be seen. Explanations that the "really real" is in the mind produce various forms of idealism and immanentism.[24] The parameters of the debate about realism and idealism are set by the prior acceptance of a fundamental or ontological subject-object structure of reality.

The question at issue is whether the human way of knowing is a matter of intuiting concepts and applying reason and logic or whether a prior pre-conceptual level of understanding operates that finds expression in concepts and is the basis for establishing basic premises and first principles. The differences between Lonergan's position and contrasting positions on knowing and their significance for theological method and understanding the human conditions of possible relation to God are central to the thesis.

## 1.7 Theory and Theology

We have stated above that the need for theory is indicated by questions about faith that seek answers in the form of explanations. A question such as 'What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Son of God or Word of God?' seeks an answer in which control of meaning is exercised through defined terms and relations that provide a framework for a systematic explanatory account that is coherent with all else that is known. Explanatory answers to such questions cannot avoid the use of some form of theory.

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[24] For a summary account of the various approaches to the relation of the human subject to the objectivity of truth, see "The Subject" in Lonergan, *2nd Collection*. 69-86.

They differ from descriptive answers that focus on images and their multifarious associations with human experience.

Whereas common sense is the realm of ordinary living in which we regard things in relation to us, theory is concerned with things in themselves and in relation to one another. The two realms of thought are complementary and understanding of their complementarity enables a differentiation of consciousness in the knower. Those who argue for simplicity and against theory in theology, complaining of it being concerned with the 'merely abstract', are simply indicating a lack of differentiation of consciousness.

To claim a place for theory in theology is not to assert that it is of primacy importance. Neither is it to commend the pursuit, for their own sake, of complex technicalities far removed from the concrete realities of the world. Speculative argument that deduces necessary conclusions from premises has fallen out of favour. It belonged to an era when classicist assumptions of culture and faith were commonly accepted as previously noted.[25]

Theology is inadequate if it is simply reasoning in which the thinker attempts to remain outside the subject matter as a dispassionate observer rather than engaged as a participant. Withdrawal from immediate concerns to the realm of theory is for the purpose of returning to the concrete situation with greater clarity and explanatory power.[26]

The place of theory in theology is evident in that the meaning of doctrines cannot be understood without it. Without a grasp of theory, control of meaning is lost and doctrines can be made to mean whatever seems to fit a particular need or occasion.

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[25] On pp31/32 above.
[26] " the separateness of theology always intends and in its ultimate stage effects a return." *Method,* 140.

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Doctrines, if experienced only as notional and abstract ideas, cease to be important. Except to those interested in abstruse questions, they are irrelevant when there are urgent and pressing 'existential' questions about life now. In a classicist framework, when dogma was given unquestioned primacy and the historical situation of faith out of which doctrines arose was largely ignored, it was a different matter. Doctrines were the starting point for theology. Speculative attempts to prove truths of faith by the use of reason resulted from a lack of understanding of the limitations involved in the objectification of the content of faith. Any dogmatic objectification, no matter how universal its claims, remains the product of a particular time and place. Because meaning changes over time and in different places, there is an ongoing need for restatement of the meaning of doctrines as expressing the content of faith. Doctrines are not ulterior grounds or foundational for faith. Their role is to specify and clarify the content of revelation as received in order that there can be a continuing conversation about its meaning in relation to all else that is known.

In the history of theology, theory has had a significant role. A prime example is the part played by the introduction of more theoretical approaches in the debates and disputes that culminated in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. New questions had arisen with respect to the cognitive meaning of belief in God as witnessed in the narrative accounts and occasional letters that eventually constituted the Christian Scriptures. Questions arose about the meaning of the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and yet also fully human. Later, greater complexity was added as further questions arose about the belief that the Holy Spirit is also related to the Father and the Son in one God.

In response to such questions, theologians used terminology, not found in Scripture but available in the culture, that eventually became the technical language that enabled the later development of theory. Hence the use of terms such as *homoousion* and *homoiousion* that indicated a significant difference of opinion that needed to be resolved. Resolution was required because, for the proponents of the various arguments, the meaning of Christian faith was under threat if the arguments of opponents were held to be true. There were disputes about whether resort to unscriptural terminology was an appropriate method of resolution. For some, that is a continuing debate. In the fourth and fifth centuries the Church ultimately accepted that the use of terms not derived from Scripture was necessary to express an understanding that addressed the questions at issue and which could be communicated in that culture. The Creeds affirmed at the Councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Chalcedon (451) would have been impossible without the prior theological work that sought to provide a coherent theoretical account of the Church's belief. It is the rise of questions that prompted the protracted process of debate that culminated in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Church resorted to terminology and the beginning of a theoretical approach in order to give an account of the truth of the matter.

The questions asked of theology change over time, and the meaning or application of past statements to the present is subject to continuing theological debate. The provision of answers to new questions requires the use of some framework for expressing an understanding. Various expressions of Platonism were the first dominant influence on Christian theology. With the West's rediscovery of Aristotle's works, through contact with Muslim-dominated Spain, new questions arose that, predictably, generated two forms of response. The first, adopted by Albert the Great

and followed by his pupil Thomas Aquinas, utilised the newly available resource of the works of the Philosopher to provide a new thoroughly systematic and explanatory account of Christian theology.  Another response, initially more powerful and advocated by Church authorities, was to assert traditional understandings and regard the new insights and learning with suspicion.  The ensuing debate and disputation meant it was well after his death before the Church began to officially recognise the achievement of Aquinas.

The process of change over time, either as development or decline, has never stopped and, with change, the questions and meanings of prior situations have to be addressed anew and reformulated so as to provide relevant answers in the new situation.  Each era of major change has resulted in controversy and disputes and, at the time, it was not obvious which, if any, argument was correct.  The present era is another in which there is argument about the best way forward that appreciates and accepts past achievement while being open to new questions and modes of approach.

A past achievement recognised in this thesis is the use of theory by Thomas Aquinas in his understanding of the Trinitarian processions.[27]  According to Bernard Lonergan, a key theoretical component of Aquinas's approach is the understanding of human understanding.  The following chapter of the thesis is a detailed consideration of Lonergan's reconstruction of the line of argument used by Aquinas and the consequences evident in his understanding the processions of the Trinity and the *imago Dei*.  The thesis will then address the implications of the considerable achievement of Aquinas, as reconstructed by Lonergan, for a contemporary understanding of being human and related to God.

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[27] *Summa theologiae,* I, qq. 27-43.

# Chapter Two

# The intellectualist position of Aquinas and its theological significance as explicated by Bernard Lonergan

## *2.1 Introduction*

This chapter considers Bernard Lonergan's argument and conclusions in his *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*.[1]  In the work Lonergan seeks to establish how Aquinas understood the relation of an inner word (arising in the mind as the inner expression of an act of understanding) to outer spoken or written words that are necessary for communication of that thought.   He considers Aquinas' understanding of the role of understanding in judgment through an act of reflective understanding that grasps the sufficiency of evidence for making a decisive yes or no regarding the truth or correspondence of a formulated thought with reality.  He also reflects on Aquinas' understanding of the relation of acts of the intellect to desiring and acts of the will.  For Lonergan, a correct understanding of the foregoing is crucial for understanding Aquinas, and this is demonstrated in his analogical understanding of processions in the Holy Trinity.

For anyone unfamiliar with the work of Thomas Aquinas, *Verbum* is extremely demanding material, as it is the distillation of much concentrated study.[2]  It is considered here for three reasons.  Firstly, because of its "foundational character" for Lonergan's later major works

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[1] Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 2 CWL (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).The work was originally published as a series under the heading "The Concept of *Verbum* in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas", *Theological Studies*, 7 (1946), 349-392, 8 (1947), 35-79, 404-444, 10 (1949), 3-40, 359-393. It was first published as a book in 1967 with an introduction written in 1964. The Editor's Preface to *Verbum* in the Collected Works edition gives details of the origin of the work and its 1964 Introduction.

[2] Lonergan comments on "spending years reaching up to the mind of Aquinas" and the difficulty and complexity of the task in *Insight,*769.

as recognised in the Editor's preface to the current *Collected Works* edition.[3]  Secondly, the study was prompted by theological questions that are a central concern of this thesis, the understanding of human conditions of the possibility of relation to the Triune God. Thirdly, if Lonergan's reading is correct, misunderstanding of Aquinas has been prevalent over many centuries with a continuing effect on both his admirers and critics and on approaches to the question of theological method.

Lonergan considered the work as within the purpose defined by Leo XIII, in *Aeterni Patris* (1879), as *vetera novis augere et perficere* (adding to and perfecting the old by the new), "though with this modality that I believed the basic task still to be the determination of what the *vetera* really were."[4]  Later, he added that the work had changed him profoundly as it also "opened challenging vistas on what the *nova* could be."[5]  Lonergan's line of argument in *Verbum* is traced in some detail here because it is necessary to consider the evidence for his conclusions about 'what the *vetera* really were' in regard to Aquinas on human knowing.  His judgment on this matter is crucial for understanding the basis and importance of fundamentally opposed conceptualist and intellectualist approaches to theology that will be considered in the following chapter.  The position established in *Verbum* became the ground for his later work on human understanding and the function and method of theology to be addressed in chapter four.

The background to undertaking the work is that during his formation and training in the Society of Jesus, Lonergan had developed a deep interest in philosophical questions about the relation of thought and reality, the philosophy of history and an appropriate

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[3] *Verbum,* viii.
[4] *Verbum,* 222.
[5] *Insight,* 770.

methodology for addressing such questions.[6]  In 1938, as he was about to commence

doctoral studies at Rome, a sudden and unexpected switch was made from philosophy to

theology, at the direction of his superiors.  The question of the understanding of operative

grace in Aquinas was suggested as an appropriate topic.  Undertaking the research made

Lonergan acutely aware of the importance of development in the thought of Aquinas, in the

context of a prevailing neglect of an historical approach in Catholic theology.  He had just

completed work on the thesis by the outbreak of the Second World War, which prompted

an early return to Canada before he was able to defend his thesis.  In the decade following,

his teaching duties allowed him time to follow his interest in the study of Aquinas,

cognitional process and the relation of thought and reality.  Lonergan sought to "reach up to

the mind of Aquinas", to discover the meaning Aquinas intended through the words or

phrases he used to signify it.[7]  This further research resulted in the articles published in

*Theological Studies* that later formed the book, *Verbum*.

Following Lonergan's argument, therefore, as dense and complex as it is in parts, is for the

purpose of understanding his position that Aquinas understood cognition and its relation to

loving from an *intellectualist* standpoint.  It is also a study of a pre-eminent historical

example of intellectualist systematic Trinitarian theology.  References to the contrasting

*conceptualist* approach are not developed here as its origin and effects on theology will be

addressed in the following chapter.  The study that resulted in the *Verbum* articles enabled

Lonergan to identify a fundamental distinction between 'Thomism', as a general label

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[6]  The history of the development of this interest is recorded by William A. Mathews, *Lonergan's Quest: A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). and Richard M Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1993).
[7] *Insight,* 769.

applied to scholastic thought, and the actual thought of Thomas Aquinas himself. Simply put, his position is that Thomism is a conceptualist systemization of Aquinas, whereas Aquinas was intellectualist. As will become evident, the distinction has direct and far-reaching consequences for approaches to theology, its method, role and function.

## *2.2 Background and Outline of Lonergan's Main Thesis*

In surveying the use of the term *verbum* in Aquinas, Lonergan noted that, when referring to an inner word, it sometimes occurs in compounds such as *verbum interius* (inner)*, verbum cordis* (of the heart), and *verbum mentis* (of the mind)*,* and he concludes that they are synonyms.[8] The term refers to the expression of an inner act of understanding that is pre-conceptual. Inner words may be contrasted with outer words, which are the product of convention and vary with different peoples and over time. The primary referent of outer words is to the meaning contained in inner words as objects of thought.[9]

Lonergan had already been impressed that Aquinas and Augustine often referred to understanding (*intelligere*) and that Aquinas made little reference to universals.[10] Research for his doctoral dissertation on operative grace had led Lonergan to the conclusion that analysis on the level of metaphysics was insufficient for understanding Aquinas. He discerned a development in the thought of Aquinas that involved changes of mind as his

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[8] *Verbum,*13.

[9] Against the background of the Aristotelian maxim that 'Good and evil are in things, but truth and falsehood are in the mind', Lonergan remarks that for Aquinas: "Because outer words may be abstract, and true or false, because real things are neither abstract nor true nor false, the immediate reference of their meaning is to an inner word." *Verbum,*16. The Aristotelian reference is, *Metaphysics,* VI, 4, 1027$^b$25.

[10] In the course of an interview in February 1981, Lonergan remarked that "He (Augustine) was talking about *intelligere* all the time, you see. Later, after I had finished my dissertation on *gratia operans*, I remembered that Thomas too talks a lot about *intelligere* and he doesn't say much about universals! So I went to work on that." P. Lambert, Tansey, C., Going, C., (eds), *Caring About Meaning: Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan* (Montreal: Thomas More Institute, 1982). 22. For a comprehensive account of the development of Lonergan's thought up the publication of *Insight*, see Mathews, *Lonergan's Quest*. Richard Liddy also provides an account of the development of Lonergan's thought in Liddy, *Transforming Light*.

understanding increased.[11]  While Aquinas necessarily expressed his understanding using and adapting terminology and theoretical approaches available at the time, Lonergan contends that he gave methodological priority to the inner process of understanding over speculative abstract reasoning.[12]  Aquinas' position on understanding, therefore, was not the necessary conclusion of an argument from basic premises but ultimately dependent on self-knowledge of what, in practice, happens to be the case.

At the time of the writing of *Verbum*, Catholic theological reflection on processions in the Trinity still often proceeded on the classic scholastic basis of general analysis and deduction within a metaphysical framework.  The results had consistently been found wanting.  It was Lonergan's view that a major factor in the situation was a failure to recognise that Trinitarian theory in Aquinas "extrapolates solely from the nature of rational consciousness".[13]  What was needed was precisely that which had been omitted: an analysis of the procession of an inner word in the human mind.

Lonergan's main thesis is that Aquinas affirmed two distinct acts of the mind in the production of the inner word.  The two acts may be correlated with the Aristotelian understanding of the twofold operation of the mind that regards essence and existence. Inner words, therefore, may be either definitions of essence or judgments of what is so.  In the first operation, intellect is moved to act in response to questions for understanding.[14]

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[11] Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, ed. F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran, vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). Lonergan comments on this in Lambert, *Caring About Meaning*. 4-5.

[12] "…the Thomist theory of intellect had an empirical and introspective basis." Lonergan, *Verbum*. 87.

[13] *Verbum,* 13. See note 3 "nor is there found an image of God in the rational creature except in the mind". *Summa theologiae,* I, q.93, a.6c. Other supporting references are given in the note.

[14] Use of the terms 'intellect' and 'will' is because psychology for Aquinas was understood in terms derived from Aristotle as the operation of faculties. The human soul is understood as …

Aquinas refers to the process as either *intelligere* (understanding) or *dicere* (utterance) and Lonergan argues that the terms refer to distinct acts. Aquinas, following Aristotle, understood intellect as consisting of passive (possible) and active (agent) intellects. *Intelligere* refers to the reception of an intelligible form or *species* in the possible intellect, while *dicere* refers to the agent intellect conceiving or formulating a definition of essence. Aquinas, therefore, understood the first operation of the intellect as the procession of an inner word in which a second act of defining is the effect of a first act of understanding. The second operation responds to the question of truth or the correspondence with reality of the understanding reached in the first operation. An act of reflective understanding produces an inner word of *iudicare* (judgment). The inner word, as a product of mind, is the medium through which truth and reality is apprehended and the medium between outer words and the realities signified, thus providing an account of the relation of thought and reality.

Augustine was the main source of the tradition that an image of the mystery of God as Trinity could be discovered in the human mind. The experience of an act of understanding, as the mind bringing forth an inner word, was at the core of the analogy. For Aquinas, understanding the production of an inner word was the basis of an appropriate human analogue for the divine procession of the Word from the Father. It could be analogously understood as a *dicere* or *iudicare*. An analogous understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit is found in the way a further act of will proceeds from an act of judgment.

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as possessing the five faculties of sense, three inner senses (common sense, imagination and memory), the faculty of an active and passive intellect and a faculty of will.

Understanding the procession of inner words in the human mind was not simply a matter of acquired self-knowledge that could be analogously applied to processions in God. In an extensive footnote Lonergan comments that: "It is to be observed that Aquinas discussed the inner word, not directly in his general treatments of intellect, but in Trinitarian passages and in discussions on the plurality of divine ideas. I should say that the theological issues forced a development of the basic Aristotelian materials."[15]

This acknowledgement of the influence of theological considerations raises the question of the influence of faith in Aquinas' understanding of the operation of the mind. If understanding was not deduced by analysis on the level of metaphysics, neither was it solely a matter of self-knowledge derived from reflection on the operations of the mind. What Aquinas believed to be true, as expressed in Church doctrine, was knowledge that contributed to understanding the procession of an inner word in the mind. For Aquinas, faith and reason were necessarily complementary because they have one source in the one God, Creator of all.[16] Correct understanding, therefore, will always demonstrate correspondence between the truths of faith and of reason. This might appear to be a circular argument in that cognitional process is held to offer an analogy to processions in the Trinity while the understanding of cognitional process is influenced by theological considerations. The question of the relation of theology and self-knowledge is central to

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[15] *Verbum,* 25, n52. The footnote outlines Lonergan's assessment of an increasing clarity in Aquinas' thought on the act of understanding. The position remains basically the same but in the early works such as the *Sentences,* where, "since the grip is not so firm", statements are made about the inner word "which hardly can be reconciled with the later position".

[16] "it is impossible for the truth of faith to be contrary to principles known by natural reason" and "natural reason cannot be contrary to the truth of faith", *Summa Contra Gentiles,* 1, c.7 and c.9.

this thesis and, in respect of the work of Aquinas on the procession of the inner word, will be assessed at the end of this chapter.

The work of Aquinas may be regarded as a response to the need of his time. An intellectual curiosity in emerging middle classes in the thirteenth century and the rise of universities resulted in the development of *sacra doctrina* into the study of theology as a science (*scientia*). In addressing the questions that had arisen, Aquinas developed his own systematic framework of thought. Aristotelian thought provided a basis that enabled clarification and specification of understandings found in St Augustine. In Lonergan's estimation:

> Because Aquinas was a genius, he experienced no great difficulty either in adapting Aristotle to his purpose or in reaching a refinement in his account of rational process – the *emanatio intelligibilis* [intelligible emanation] – that made explicit what Augustine could only suggest. Because, finally, Aquinas was a man of his time, he had to leave to a later age the task of acknowledging the discontinuity of natural and human science and of working out its methodological implications.[17]

By integrating Church doctrine within a basically Aristotelian framework, Aquinas met the need of his time for an explanatory theology that addressed contemporary questions using the latest philosophy and science. In so doing, he spoke ahead of the level of many of his contemporaries because Aristotle was regarded with suspicion, his thought having no place for a personal God who was Creator and yet transcendent. Some Church authorities condemned the writings of Aquinas before they began to be positively received generally and then eventually revered as authoritative.

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[17] *Verbum,* 9-10

Having briefly outlined the background of the work and the conclusions his argument will reach, we turn to Lonergan's own later (1964) introduction that focuses on the central issue involved.

## *2.3 Subject and Soul*

Encapsulated in the title of the Introduction, "Subject and Soul", is the central issue underlying the questions to be decided concerning the procession of an inner word. Lonergan's first sentence reads:

> In working out his concept of *verbum* Aquinas was engaged not merely in fitting an original Augustinian creation into an Aristotelian framework but also attempting, however remotely and implicitly, to fuse together what to us may seem so disparate: a phenomenology of the subject with a psychology of the soul.[18]

The contrast in need of reconciliation is that between Aristotle's understanding of 'soul' as an impersonal principle of life and Augustine's intensely personal description and understanding of the operation of his own mind, as described in such works as the *Confessions* and reflected in his struggle for an adequate understanding the *imago Dei* in *De Trinitate*. Differences between Plato and Aristotle about the understanding of 'form' and 'soul' and cognition provide the wider context for understanding the issue.[19]

Lonergan explains that Aristotle's theoretical framework was deficient in regard to understanding the human soul or mind. While comprehensive and systematic, it failed "to bring out effectively the essential difference between an investigation of plant life and an

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[18] *Verbum,* 3.

[19] Both Augustine and Aquinas modified and supplemented their basic philosophic influences in line with their Christian beliefs and the questions that they addressed. Augustine's main influence was a Platonism in which 'Forms' were subsumed as eternal reasons or creative Ideas in the mind of God, and the human soul was understood as capable of receiving a vision or impression of eternal truth through encounter with the divine. Aquinas was influenced by Aristotelian theory in which the terms 'Form' and 'Soul' have quite different meanings and cognitional process is also differently understood. The issues of the understanding of Form, Soul and cognitional process are considered in this chapter and will be developed in the thesis.

investigation of the human mind".[20]  For Aristotle, the soul is an inner principle, the

constituent of life, the first act of an organic body, and this applies equally to all organic

bodies, whether plants, animals or human beings.[21]  Only one means of distinguishing

between different kinds of souls was recognised by Aristotle.  They were to be

differentiated by their potencies; potencies were to be known by their acts, and acts

specified by their objects.[22]

In such a framework the meaning given to the term 'object' is crucial.  Objects may be

regarded intentionally or causally.  They are either the intentional term of a conscious act or

the cause of an act.  Aquinas, in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima,* defined objects

in terms of efficient or final causality rather than intentionality.  Finding explanations

through causality, understood in a broad and general sense as an intelligible relationship of

dependence, is the characteristic approach of Aquinas.

Obvious problems immediately arise if the method appropriate for studying plant life is

applied to the study of human beings.  Vegetative activity is not accessible to human minds

whereas our thoughts and acts are intentional and conscious.  To reflect on conscious

intentional thoughts is to come to awareness of an intending subject and the problem arises

of relating subject and soul.[23]  In Lonergan's opinion, both Aquinas and Aristotle attended

to data of intentional consciousness in reaching their understandings of human

understanding.

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[20] *Verbum,* 4.
[21] Aristotle, *De Anima,* II, 1, 412b 4-5.
[22] Aristotle, *De Anima*. II, 4, 415a 14-20.
[23] *Verbum,* 5.

Aquinas explicitly appealed to inner experience and, I submit, Aristotle's account of intelligence, of insight into phantasm, and of the fact that intellect knows itself, not by a *species* of itself, but by a *species* of its object, has too uncanny an accuracy to be possible without the greatest introspective skill.[24]

For Augustine, the mind knows itself through itself.[25] Through the reflection of the mind on itself, he claimed to discover the procession of an inner word in the context of his work on *De Trinitate*. Lonergan cites a passage in Book XV, as indicative of his understanding of the procession of an inner word.[26] The inner word is described as an utterance of truth brought forth in the mind in the act of understanding.[27] This was something that Augustine claimed to understand through reflection on his own experience of knowing and loving.[28] If that is granted, discovery of what Augustine meant, and whether or not it is a reality, involves self-discovery through an exploration of the operation of one's own mind. In regard to understanding Aquinas, Lonergan concludes:

> The contention of this study will be that Aquinas was speaking of understanding and that an interpretation in terms of general metaphysics misses the point; to follow Aquinas here, one must practice introspective rational psychology; without that, one no more can know the created image of the Blessed Trinity, as Aquinas conceived it, than a blind man can know colors.[29]

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[24] *Verbum,* 5.

[25] *Verbum,* 8-9, n9

[26] *Verbum,* 7, n8, the passage cited is from *De Trintate,* XV, xii, 22.

[27] Lonergan's summary of points made by Augustine include that it is non-linguistic (*verbum linquae nullius*) because it is prior to a 'wording' of it in any particular language. It is described as derived in that it is "brought forth" or "born", and as dependent because it has "nothing of its own but everything from that knowledge from which it is born". That dependence is not blind or automatic but conscious and cognitive because "we utter what we know" and "from the vision of knowledge a vision of thought arises". It makes no difference whether the *verbum* has its origin in memory or recently acquired knowledge. What matters is truth, the correspondence of the *verbum* with things known. It is "a word most like the known thing" and "a true word of a true thing". All phrases in quotation marks in the paragraph are from the translation of the passage from *De Trinitate* XV in *Verbum.*

[28] This claim has been the subject of challenge. See Philip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Cary sees Augustine as primarily engaged in conceptual analysis to provide solutions to philosophical-theological problems. His work will be discussed in the following chapter, section 3.3.1.

[29] *Verbum,* 24.

The key issue, as Lonergan understands it, is an understanding of the process of understanding. Lonergan's understanding of Aquinas on the two acts of intellect that result in the procession of an inner word will be outlined in the following two sections.

## *2.4  The Inner Word in Direct Understanding and Definition*

Lonergan's main consideration in the first chapter (or article) is to indicate how Aquinas understood the act of direct understanding in the mind and its connection with outer words in which it may be defined. By referring to defining and definition Lonergan avoids using the term 'conceptualise' when exegeting the work of Aquinas.[30]

### 2.4.1 Questions that seek understanding of a cause or reason

Movement toward an act of understanding begins with a question. For Aquinas seeking answers in the form of an explanation or cause is to seek the *quod quid est* (what something is), or the *quod quid erat esse* (what something is to be). These phrases are literal translations of Greek terms employed, or in the latter case coined, by Aristotle. Lonergan describes how Aristotle attempted to establish the meaning of the *quod quid est* question by indicating that any such question can be listed under one of four headings.[31]

Either one asks (1) whether there is an *x*, or (2) what is an *x*, or (3) whether *x* is *y*, or (4) why *x* is *y*. Lonergan points out that the first and third are empirical questions asking about matters of fact and can be answered by observation and experiment. The second and fourth are ways of asking about a cause or reason and are the same question, as Aristotle illustrated by the example 'What is an eclipse of the moon?' and 'Why is the moon thus

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[30] The terms 'conceptualism' and 'conceptualist' are used by Lonergan to identify an opposing viewpoint and its protagonists. It would seem that since he regarded the role of concepts in the cognitional process to be commonly misunderstood, he decided that the use of such terminology at this point would not clarify but obscure an understanding of Aquinas.

[31] *Verbum,* 26.

darkened?' Transposition of a 'what' question into a 'why' question indicates that discovery of a cause or reason will provide an answer.[32] It is not simply a matter of seeing what is there to be seen. As Lonergan comments "Grasping the cause is, not an ocular vision, but an insight into the sensible data. Grasping the universal is the production of the inner word that expresses that insight."[33]

The transposition of ultimate and simple questions like 'What is a man?' or 'What is a house?' into why questions is a matter of recognizing that the answer is a cause that stands between the sensible data and the concept whose definition is sought. For Aristotle, such a question seeks the formal cause, the form, principle or nature of a thing that makes it what it is. What makes this sort of body a man? Why are these materials arranged in such a way, a house? The answer to such questions is the formal cause of a 'human soul' or the 'artificial form' of a house. This does not mean that the answer to the question 'What is a man' is that a man is his human soul. The formal cause is only a part of a whole and it must be transposed to the question 'what' that regards the essence of the thing, that is, the form plus matter. Lonergan summarises this argument and its significance in the following terms:

> The *quod quid est* is at the very centre of Aristotelian and Thomist thought. For *quod quid est`* is the first and immediate middle term of a scientific syllogistic demonstration; simultaneously it is the goal and term of all positive inquiry, which begins from wonder about data and proceeds to the search for causes – material, efficient, final, but principally formal; for formal cause makes matter a thing and, combined with common matter, is the essence of the thing. The *quod quid est* is the key idea not only in all logic and methodology, but also in all metaphysics.[34]

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[32] Aristotle's general theory of causation and explanation involved consideration of four factors or causes. To account for a bronze statue involves matter, form or structure, the agent responsible and the purpose. These provide examples of the material, formal, efficient and final causes. *Physics,* II, 3.

[33] *Verbum,* 27 The question of what is involved in gaining 'insight into sensible data' will be taken up in the following section.

[34] *Verbum,* 37.

It follows that, for Aquinas, there is a parallel between cognition and ontology and also an interaction. What is sought to be understood, through the *quod quid est*, is reality and the real is also the cause of knowledge because "the essential definition proceeds from an act of understanding" and "the real thing is what it is because form has actuated matter."[35]

In Lonergan's assessment, whereas Aristotle had approached understanding (and form) by deduction, Aquinas understood that to be impossible because *intelligere* is a pre-conceptual act of understanding. Attempts to pin down the meaning of understanding must use conceptual expressions and, therefore, are no longer the act of understanding. The only valid approach to the pre-conceptual therefore, is through self-awareness of the operations of the mind.

Lonergan observes that the contemporary denial of the reality of 'soul' "is really the denial of the objectivity of the intelligible; the denial that knowing a cause is knowing anything real."[36] The questions of the objectivity of the intelligible and the notion of reality are central to the concern of the thesis and are being cumulatively addressed.

## 2.4.2 Insight into Phantasm

While the idea that insight is the grasp of the intelligible in sensible data originates with Aristotle,[37] Aquinas explicitly appealed to experience as evidence.

> Anyone can experience this of himself, that when he tries to understand something, he forms certain phantasms to serve him by way of examples, in which as it were he examines what he is striving to understand. It is for this reason that when we wish to make someone understand something we lay examples before him, from which he can form phantasms for the purpose of understanding.[38]

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[35] *Verbum,* 38.
[36] *Verbum,* 34.
[37] *Verbum,* 27, n54 refers to *De Anima*, III, 8, 432a 3-10 and Aquinas' commentary.
[38] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae,* I, q.84, a.7c.

Aquinas grasped that an object has to be imaged in the mind as something to be understood, that is a 'phantasm' has to be produced, for understanding to occur. Lonergan illustrates with examples from Euclidean geometry where a diagram becomes the 'phantasm' that makes possible an insight that cannot be deduced from concepts. Such a phantasm is the object of intellect, as object to potency, as sensible objects to sense, as colour to vision, and it is, therefore, also the mover of intellect.[39] To understand is to grasp the interrelation of data and, in so doing, its intelligible unity is identified. "The act of understanding leaps forth when the sensible data are in a suitable constellation."[40]

When learning something for the first time phantasm produces the 'suitable constellation' that enables insight. When one already has a grasp of understanding, an informed intellect can guide the production of an appropriate phantasm. Only when it has understood, and because it has understood, is the mind able to produce an inner word, the definition. The person who understands knows the abstract universal in the particular, and that is expressed in an inner word consequent to insight.[41] Such understanding is not produced automatically or mechanically but intelligently. This is commonly recognised in the obvious difference between memorising data and understanding it.

### 2.4.3 *Emanatio Intelligibilis*

Causation is always an intelligible relation of dependence for Aquinas.[42] The intelligibility of the procession of an inner word is that of intelligence in act or, in the term used by Aquinas an *emanatio intelligibilis* (intelligible emanation). Whereas the intelligibility of

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[39] *Verbum,* 41-42. In nn130-140 Lonergan lists many passages in which Aquinas explains or uses such arguments.
[40] *Verbum,* 28.
[41] *Verbum,* 43.
[42] Section 2.4.1 pp50-52 above.

natural processes is passive and potential as that which can be understood, *emanatio intelligibilis* is constitutive and creative as the dynamic ground of logic and the intelligibility of intelligible natural laws.[43]

This difference between *emanatio intelligibilis* and the intelligibility of natural processes is crucial to understanding how Aquinas understood processions in the Trinity. He used the term at the beginning of his treatise on the Trinity in the *Summa theologiae* to describe the causality involved in processions in the Trinity as being understood "the way it is understood in intelligible emanation, namely, as the procession of an intelligible word from the one uttering it."[44]

Lonergan concludes that Aquinas understands the procession of an inner word in the human mind as being:

> intelligible in a manner that is essentially different from, that transcends, the passive, specific, imposed intelligibility of other natural processes. Any effect has sufficient ground in its cause, but an inner word not merely has a sufficient ground in the act of understanding it expresses; it also has a knowing as sufficient ground, and that ground is operative precisely as a knowing, knowing itself to be sufficient. To introduce a term that will summarize this, we may say that the inner word is rational, not indeed with the derived rationality of discourse, of reasoning from premises to conclusions, but with the basic and essential rationality of rational consciousness, with the rationality that can be discerned in any judgment and in all concepts.[45]

It is the act of understanding that connects the final product of thought and sensibility. It acts as a pivot in a movement of the mind from data to concepts, from the particular, concrete and approximate to the universal, abstract and ideal. This is an operation of the mind, of intelligence in act, of which we are conscious and which produces the inner word as definition or concept. Concepts, therefore, are the product of intelligence in act and are

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[43] *Verbum,* 46.
[44] *Summa theologiae,* I, q.27, a. 1c. ad fin. ———, *Verbum.* 46. n162.
[45] *Verbum,* 47.

not produced automatically. Lonergan was convinced that "there cannot be any reasonable doubt that the foregoing represents the mind of Aquinas."[46]

The intellectual character of the formation of concepts also implies a psychological account of abstraction.[47] By 'psychological account of abstraction' Lonergan means the elimination by the intellect of the irrelevant because it is understood to be irrelevant. In the course of understanding, of discovering the intelligible unity in presenting data, there is always some abstraction, which the Scholastic tradition understood as occurring in three degrees. The first degree of abstraction is common to all science and is the consideration of the *per se* and not the *per accidens*. The 'here and now' or 'there and then' are irrelevant to understanding, explanation, or assigning of causes. In the second degree, mathematics prescinds from all sensible qualities. The third degree prescinds from all particulars to be concerned with general concepts at the level of metaphysics. For Lonergan, Aquinas' theory of abstraction is primarily psychological because it is based on the character of acts of understanding of which conceptualisation is the expression.

> Conceptualisation is the self-expression of an act of understanding and such self-expression is possible only because understanding is self-possessed, conscious of itself and its own conditions as understanding; insofar as the understanding has its conditions all within the intelligible order, the expression abstracts from all that is sensible and imaginable, and so is in the third degree; insofar as the understanding has conditions in the imaginable, but not in the empirical, order of sensible presentations, the abstraction is of the second degree; insofar as the understanding has conditions within the empirical order of sensible presentations, the abstraction is of the first degree.[48]

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[46] *Verbum,* 48.
[47] *Verbum,* 52-53.
[48] *Verbum,* 55.

The act of understanding, understood as intelligence in act that originates an inner word, is

the key to grasping why Aquinas described the mode of causality proper to human intellect

as *emanatio intelligibilis*.

> It is in the self-possession of understanding as the ground of possible conceptualisation that one
> may best discern what is meant by saying that the self-expression of understanding is an
> *emanatio intelligibilis,* a procession from knowledge as knowledge and because of knowledge as
> knowledge.[49]

Even ultimate concepts, such as potency and act which are used in the process of reasoning

but defy simple definition, are explained by Aristotle as the result of reasoning and

reflection on the sensible and concrete.[50]  Between potency and act there exists a relation of

proportion.  As the eyes are to sight, so is the proportion of matter to form.  As sight is to

seeing, so is the proportion of operative potency to operation.  Expressing the same idea in

different terms in regard to the act of understanding, Lonergan writes:

> One begins by imagining instances.  The comparisons of the *cogitativa* prepare one for the act of
> insight, seeing in the data what of itself cannot be a datum; when we express this insight by a
> concept, we say 'possibility'.  In closed eyes we discern the possibility of actual seeing; in eyes
> we discern the possibility of sight; what is possible is the act, and its possibility is the potency;
> both are objective, but the act is objective when it occurs, the potency when the act is possible;
> and that objectivity of possibility is, for instance, what makes the difference between an
> invention and a mere bright idea.  Ultimate concepts, like derived concepts, proceed from
> understanding.[51]

Lonergan explains that such an understanding of the process of understanding has

implications for an understanding of being.  If intelligibility is the ground of possibility,

that 'possibility' is the possibility of being.  The concept 'being', however, is the first

concept and, therefore, cannot be reduced to prior concepts.  As Lonergan states,

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[49] *Verbum,* 56.

[50] Aristotle's examples of reflecting on sense experience in respect of potency and act include the comparison
of eyes closed but not blind and seeing, the builder and raw materials, the raw materials and the finished
product. *Verbum,* 56, see nn 201 and 202.

[51] *Verbum,* 56-57.

what is prior to the first concept is, not a prior concept, but an act of understanding; and like other concepts, the concept of being is an effect of the act of understanding. Hence, when it was stated above that intellect from intelligibility through possibility reaches being, an attempt was being made to describe the virtualities of the act of understanding in its self-possession, to conceptualize reflectively the pre-conceptual act of intelligence that utters itself in the concept 'being'.[52]

Lonergan indicates that while Aquinas never attempted any such descriptive psychology, the implications that he drew are consistent with it. It is clear that Aquinas understood the concept of being as natural to intellect because for him intelligibility is natural to intellect as its act and defining or conceptualisation as its activity. The concept of being is the conceptualisation of intelligibility as such, and so is also natural to intellect. The content of the concept of being is indeterminate because it is conceived from any act of understanding and proceeds from intelligibility in act as such.[53]

Lonergan provides a clear summary statement of the central point of the argument in one sentence when he writes that the "concept of inner word is rich and nuanced: it is no mere metaphysical condition of a type of cognition; it aims at being a statement of psychological fact, and the precise nature of those facts can be ascertained only by ascertaining what was meant by *intelligere*."[54]

What Aquinas meant by *intelligere* in direct understanding and defining as the first operation of intellect has been outlined. The content of *intelligere* in the second operation of the intellect in the reflective act of understanding is the subject of the next section.

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[52] *Verbum,* 57.
[53] *Verbum,* 58, nn 207-211 indicate references in Aquinas.
[54] *Verbum,* 59.

## 2.5  The Inner Word in Reflective Understanding and Judgment

Insight into phantasm as a direct act of understanding and its expression in a definition only reaches the stage of possible knowledge. Knowing is a matter of addressing the further question as to whether a definition truly expresses what is the case. This section addresses the second operation of the intellect that produces the inner word of judgment.

### 2.5.1 The synthetic element in judgment – composition or division

According to Lonergan, Aquinas generally used the terminology of *compositio vel divisio* (composition or division) for the second type of inner word.[55] The relevant background is found in Aristotle's use of grammar in specifying philosophic problems, particularly the distinction between simple and composite forms of speech and the correspondence of truth or falsity in the mind with linguistic synthesis. Truth or falsity does not lie in any one term but is expressed in a conjunction of words, such as 'Socrates is a man'. Aquinas examined the role of the verb 'to be' in such statements and concluded that the primary meaning of *est* is 'to be in actuality' and, consequently, *est* is also able to connote 'true' or 'real' and *non est* 'false' or 'unreal'. It is through a composition of words in sentences that an understanding of the real composition of things is expressed. Lonergan treats this "purely synthetic element" of judgment first.[56] The positing of the synthesis, which is at the heart of judgement, is dealt with in the following section.

Lonergan's concern in discussing the synthetic element in judgment is to indicate that the bringing together of concepts in a synthesis does not occur because of any change in the

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[55] *Verbum,* 61
[56] *Verbum,* 62.

concepts. Concepts, of themselves, cannot merge or change. Change occurs only when understanding changes and develops through the occurrence of insights.

> The psychological fact that insights are not unrelated atoms, that they develop, coalesce, form higher unities, was fully familiar to Aquinas. Repeatedly he spoke of an *intelligere multa per unum* (understanding many things through one): many acts of understanding cannot be simultaneous in one intellect; but one act of understanding can and does grasp many objects in a single view.[57]

Such syntheses are the product of reasoning that originates from, and is the development of, direct understanding that produces the inner word of definition. Only when understanding has grasped the necessary terms does such reasoning lead to increased understanding.[58] The process involves all the resources of sense, memory, imagination, insight, concepts, critical reflection and judgment.

While human beings naturally know in potency, knowing in act is a matter of acquisition. For Aquinas, a further 'infused' knowing is a gift that comes by faith, the truths of divine self-revelation that could not otherwise be known. Because reasoning begins from understanding, and reasoning is not possible unless we understand something, to avoid infinite regress it was necessary to posit the existence of an intellect (*intellectus*) that is naturally possessed.[59] Aquinas also describes it as a *habitus principiorum* (habit of principles), natural to human beings, of coming to know. In Lonergan's opinion a "very subtle introspective psychology" is evident in these distinctions.

> The natural habit though it has a determination from sense, results from intellectual light alone; the acquired habit has in sense not only a determination but also a cause. Thus the natural habit is more like the infused than the acquired: the infused virtue of faith is not caused by, but only receives a determination from, the preaching of the gospel.[60]

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[57] *Verbum,* 65.
[58] *Verbum,* 68.
[59] *Verbum,* 69.
[60] *Verbum,* 69. The theological significance of the last part of the quotation is worth noting. Simply put, faith is a gift of God. The means involved in its reception is secondary.

On this basis Lonergan is able to delineate two types of first principle. One is reasoned towards from sensible data. The other type arises from the nature of intelligence in act and consists of naturally known principles. An example is the principle of non-contradiction. This principle does not arise from insight into the data of sense. It is intelligence in act that knows and any sensible instance is merely an illustration. Its field of application, therefore, is not limited to the realm of human experience. It is a universal truth, a first principle.

Also natural to human knowing is its object, being. As has been argued, if intelligibility is the ground of possibility, and that possibility is the possibility of being, then it is clear that the principle of non-contradiction is known naturally. The question whether something 'is' or 'is not' is the first principle governing all judgment.[61]

### 2.5.2 Judgment as the positing of the synthesis

The positing of the synthesis is a "more elementary" aspect of the act of judgment and "may be characterised by the fact that in it there emerges knowledge of truth."[62] It is therefore, the central issue in judgment.[63] Knowledge of truth is not merely knowledge of a mental composition or correct definition but of correspondence between mental and real composition. Correct judgment expresses "consciously possessed truth through which reality is both known and known to be known".[64]

The question as to how it is possible to judge that a mental composition corresponds to the real composition and to know that it is known is the question of the criterion or standard of

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[61] *Verbum,* 69-70.
[62] *Verbum,* 71.
[63] *Verbum,* 71. In his first sentence here Lonergan states that: "The act of judgment is not merely synthesis but also the positing of synthesis". While synthesis is an element of judgment, it is in the positing of the synthesis that actual judgment occurs. Later Lonergan is clear on this and able to write "Judgment is, not synthesis, but positing or rejecting synthesis." "*Insight*: Preface to a Discussion" in *Collection*, CWL4, 149.
[64] *Verbum,* 61.

judgment. In the view of Aquinas, the principles of the intellect itself provide the standard. He noted that the term 'mind' (*mens*) is derived from measuring (*mensurando*). "In what pertains to the soul, the term 'mind' is used in the same way as the term 'intellect'. For only the intellect receives knowledge about things by measuring them as if by its own principles."[65] Understanding Aquinas on the nature of the procession of an inner word of judgment from a reflective act of understanding is reached through an appreciation of what he meant by the intellect measuring "by its own principles".

Lonergan considers the use of the notion of assent by Aquinas as illustrative.[66] Assent is "the motion of the intellect with respect to a conception" and "occurs when we judge the conception of a thing to be true."[67] Assent, therefore, is judgment regarded as a personal act. It is based on the apprehension of evidence and includes "an awareness of its own validity, as a truth in the subject rather than as a truth absolutely and as a medium in which reality is apprehended".[68] What is described here is the movement, caused by the operation of intellectual light, of assent to first principles and the first principles motivating assent to demonstrable conclusions. For Aquinas, therefore, judgment is a matter of reflective understanding that grasps the sufficiency of reason for making a judgment in a single synthetic apprehension of all the factors, intellectual and sensitive.

> (Judgment) has to do with the reflective activity of the mind assaying its own knowledge. There are truths that naturally are known; they form the touchstone of other truth; and judging is a matter of reducing other issues to the naturally known first principles. Thus in demonstrations certitude is attained by a resolution to first principles; such a resolution is the efficient cause of

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[65] *Verbum,* 72, n46. The citation is from *De Veritate,* q.10, a. 1c. In note 46, Lonergan also gives another citation which follows shortly afterwards in *De Veritate*, q.10, a. 9c. "Judgment is had about anything according to that which is the measure of that thing'.
[66] *Verbum,* 73, nn48-53, where references to Aquinas on assent are listed.
[67] *Verbum,* 73.
[68] *Verbum,* 73.

> the certitude; until the resolution reaches the first principles doubt is possible, but once it has reached them doubt is excluded.[69]

It is clear that, for Aquinas, intellect, per se, is regarded as infallible in regard to natural knowledge and to principles known immediately from such knowledge. This does not preclude human error in deductions in the process of reasoning because error is excluded only in instances of a correct resolution from first principles.

As in the first operation of the intellect, the procession of the inner word of judgment is an *emanatio intelligibilis.* Judgment occurs because there is a determination of reasonableness, of a necessary connection between a hypothetical synthesis and its source data. Grasp of such a necessary connection precedes judgment and only in the act of correct judgment is reality known. Understanding and reason, and not that which is given by the senses as a sense of reality, are the basic criteria for full human knowing. "The real is what is; and 'what is' is known in the rational act of judgment."[70]

## 2.6 Wisdom

Recognition that the study concerns a theological as well as a human question requires consideration, not only of the "mere mechanism of the human intellect" but also of the habit and virtue of wisdom.[71] Aquinas, used the term 'habit' in a technical sense to mean a habit acquired through acts. Acquired habits are qualities of the sensitive and intellectual potencies of a person achieved through repeated acts of the same nature. They dispose a person to think and act readily in certain ways. One hardly has to think about what to do in certain situations and is able to act almost automatically. Habits, per se, are morally neutral

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[69] *Verbum,* 4-75, nn58-63 where references to Aquinas are listed.
[70] *Verbum,* 20.
[71] *Verbum,* 78.

but particular habits may be characterised as good or bad. Following Aristotle, Aquinas uses the term 'virtue' for good operative habits and 'vices' for bad operative habits.

For Aquinas, there were three habits of speculative intellect, the habits of intellect, science and wisdom. The habits of intellect and wisdom are related in the manner of the relation of acts of direct and reflective understanding, while the habit of science correlates with the development of direct understanding to demonstrable conclusions.[72]

The habit of wisdom, therefore, is the virtue of making correct judgments. It has to do with proficiency in knowing the real through reaching the true. Just as it was necessary to posit the existence of intellect to avoid infinite regress in reasoning to conclusions, the necessity of positing an ultimate reality is grounded in avoiding infinite regress in reasoning that grounds realities by one another. There must be an ultimate reality that is most real and most true and is the object of wisdom.[73]

Aquinas identified wisdom with Aristotle's 'first philosophy' defined as the knowledge of all things in their ultimate causes. For both, knowledge is fundamentally by identity in act. This standpoint is summarised by Aquinas when he states that:

> the sensible in act is the sense in act, and the intelligible in act is the intellect in act. For we sense or understand something in act from this, that our intellect is informed in act by the species of the sensible or the intelligible. And sense or intellect is other than the sensible or the intelligible only insofar as each is in potency.[74]

The problem of knowledge by identity is that of knowledge being of the other. As long as intellect and the intelligibility of an object are in potency to knowing and being known, there is no knowledge. Inasmuch as intellect and the intelligibility are identical in act there

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[72] *Verbum,* 79-80.
[73] *Verbum,* 81-82
[74] *Verbum,* 84, n115. The citation is from the *Summa theologiae,* I, q.87, a. 1, ad 3m.

is knowledge but not yet knowledge of the other. Reflection on the identity of act itself is required for knowledge of the other. "Rational reflection has to bear the weight of the transition from knowledge as a perfection to knowledge as of the other."[75]

Basically, this is a development of an Aristotelian position.[76] Aquinas, therefore, could not accept the Platonism of Augustine, for whom knowing was an inner spiritual reception or vision of eternal Ideas. For Aquinas, the reason we are able to know is inner intellectual light: "the intellectual light itself which we have within us is nothing else than a certain participated likeness of the uncreated light."[77] It is possible, therefore, to proceed from the identity in act of intellect and intelligible, and sensation and sensible, to valid concepts and true affirmations of existence because the process involves the operation of intellectual light.

Such a description of the process of knowing does not provide answers to questions of epistemology. The major contrast between sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge is that, while sense knowledge is simply empirical awareness, intellectual knowledge reflects upon itself and is aware of its own truth. Lonergan asks, "is one to say that, since we know by what we are, so also we know that we know by knowing what we are?"[78] He maintains that Aquinas' statement in *de Veritate* that "intellect knows the truth in this way, that it reflects on itself" refers to his understanding of the means of self-knowledge.[79] Examination of evidence that Aquinas engaged in such reflection to achieve self-knowledge is the next task.

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[75] *Verbum,* 85.
[76] *Verbum,* 5, n119. The reference is to *Summa contra Gentiles,* 2, c.98 ad fin.
[77] *Verbum,* 85, n122. The citation is from *Summa theologiae,* I, q. 84, a. 5c.
[78] *Verbum,* 86.
[79] *Verbum,* 86-87, nn 125, 126.

## 2.7 Self-Knowledge of Soul

Aquinas was clear that the human soul does not know itself by a direct understanding of its own essence. While he believed this to be true for God and the angels he knew human knowledge is a matter of the activation of a potency. Once knowledge has been acquired, however, it is possible to reflect on acts of understanding that resulted in knowledge and, therefore, to reflect on the nature of understanding itself. This further reflection is possible because understanding is by identity in act, the intelligibility of the *species* understood <u>is</u> the *species* of understanding intellect.

> Evidently, the Aristotelian and Thomist program is not a matter of considering ocular vision and then conceiving an analogous spiritual vision that is attributed to a spiritual faculty named intellect. On the contrary, it is a process of introspection that discovers the act of insight into phantasm and the definition as an expression of the insight, that almost catches intellect in its forward movement towards defining and in its backwards reference to sense for the concrete realization of the defined.[80]

Empirical awareness of inner acts, therefore, is the data to be understood. This is fundamental to understanding Lonergan and this thesis. There is a unity of human consciousness that means that it is not the eye that sees, the ear that hears or the intellect that understands, but ourselves operating as subject. An explanation of operations leading to cognition is not attained directly but has to be worked out discursively. For Aquinas, it was necessarily expressed in terms of the Aristotelian empirical method of objects, acts and potencies to reach knowledge of the essence of the soul. He was well aware that it was an area of reasoning where error was not only possible but had been frequent.[81]

Aquinas, therefore, relied upon and appealed to experience in explaining his understanding of cognitional theory. In disputes about whether all people participate in one understanding

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[80] *Verbum,* 88.
[81] *Verbum,* 89.

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or intellect, he used the argument that *hic homo intelligit* ('this man understands'), thus drawing attention to the fact that every person possesses a capacity to understand (a possible intellect).[82] Intelligence in act (agent intellect) was to be identified, therefore, with the ground of intellectual light.[83] Intellectual light is a medium, in the sense that it makes other objects knowable, and is no more an object than is corporeal light in the act of seeing colours. While the human soul does not know itself directly by its own essence, it does know its own intellectual light by its own intellectual light. But it does not know this directly, as an object, but as the light that makes possible the identification of the intelligibility of data.[84]

A conspicuous example of the experience of the operation of intellectual light is in assent to first principles, such as the principle of non-contradiction or that the whole is greater than the parts. The insight is an immediate inner movement that proceeds to rational assent. For Aquinas, because intellectual light is a created participation in the eternal Light that is God, collaboration between divine and human knowledge, faith and reason, is possible. Any certitude of knowledge that may be possessed, of conclusions or principles, comes from intellectual light. It is experienced in the occurrence of insights and as the light of reason that concludes to the true and the real. It is also that by which God addresses us.[85] Lonergan summarises Aquinas' view of intellectual light in the relation of the inner words of definition and judgment as follows:

> Inasmuch as the act of understanding grasps its own conditions as the understanding of this sort of thing, it abstracts from the irrelevant and expresses itself in a definition of essence. But

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[82] *Verbum,* 89-90.
[83] *Verbum,* 91, n 149.
[84] *Verbum,* 91, nn 150-153.
[85] *Verbum,* 92, nn154-158.

inasmuch as the act of understanding grasps its own transcendence-in-immanence, its quality of intellectual light as a participation of the divine and uncreated Light, it expresses itself in judgment, in a positing of truth, in the affirmation or negation of reality.[86]

In any act of direct understanding the identity in act of intellect and intelligibility is limited to the intelligibility of particular sensible data. Reasoning that develops such acts of understanding can lead to an understanding of how the human mind is proportionate to knowledge of reality. The act of reflective understanding "consists in a grasp of the native infinity of the intellect …and from such infinity one can grasp the capacity of the mind to know reality."[87] That "native infinity" of intellect to know the real is described by Aquinas as *potens omnia facere et fieri* (ability to make or become all things). While derived from Aristotle, Lonergan maintains that it was developed by Aquinas and became his own. The capacity of intellectual light to reflect on its own nature and its correspondence with reality or being (*ens*), in an act of reflective understanding, is fundamental for self-knowledge. As Lonergan states:

> *ens* is not just another concept, another *quod quid est*, another but most general essence; the concept of *ens* is any concept, any *quod quid est*, any essence, when considered, not as some highest common factor nor again simply in itself, but in its relation to its own *actus essendi* (existence), which is known in the act of judgment. … On the other hand, if intellect is *potens omnia facere et fieri*, then since we know by what we are, per se and naturally, we do know *ens*; further since we know we know by knowing what we are, it is by reflection on the nature of intellect that we know our capacity for truth and for knowledge of reality.[88]

Experience of the capacity of intellectual light to reflect upon itself and come to right judgment is experience of knowing that we know from within and naturally. Since knowledge is a matter of knowing by what we are, the problem is not that of moving from subject to object, from an inner to an outer world. Rather, as Lonergan argues, it is:

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[86] *Verbum,* 94.
[87] *Verbum,* 96.
[88] *Verbum,* 97, nn192-195 cite the references in Aquinas that support the statements.

a problem of moving from above downwards, of moving from an infinite potentiality commensurate with the universe towards a rational apprehension that seizes the difference of subject and object in essentially the same way that it seizes any other real distinction. Thus realism is immediate, not because it is naïve and unreasoned and blindly affirmed, but because we know the real before we know such a difference within the real as the difference between subject and object.[89]

Since we know that we know by knowing what we are, the rational reflection involved in wisdom involves a duplication of ourselves. The principle and term of such a duplication are identical in the procession of an infinite Word from the infinite act of understanding that is God.[90] They are not identical in human beings because the experience of inquiry and understanding is not of their pure form but only in regard to something. There is a basic duality, therefore, between the immanent intellectual light of the human intellect and the uncreated light that is the object of our desire. Our immanent intellectual light tends toward the infinite uncreated light. Our questioning and longing are inexhaustible, while our capacity to achieve and receive are limited by finitude. Aquinas regarded such desire as experienced in a restlessness, a spirit of inquiry, that ultimately desires the vision of God. While Augustine's restlessness was of the heart, for Aquinas restlessness was primarily of the mind.[91]

Lonergan concludes that, for Aquinas, intellectual light, as the active principle of human knowledge of reality, is:

the most convincing sample in us of the stuff of which the author of the universe and of our minds consists. Between these poles, the highest in us and in God the most like us, our wisdom moves to knowledge of itself and its source. Were our wisdom substantial, it would not be subject to that type of duality. But in fact it is accidental, a perfection that relates us to Perfection. Not only is it accidental, but also it is acquired gradually. Towards it we are moved in a dialectical oscillation, envisaging more clearly now one pole and now another, with each

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[89] *Verbum,* 99.
[90] *Verbum,* 99.
[91] *Verbum,* 100.

addition to either at once throwing more light on the other and raising further questions with regard to it.[92]

The Augustinian vision of eternal truth was thus replaced by the role of intellectual light in coming to knowledge. For Aquinas, the act of judgment that affirms the reality of a conceived essence involves normative knowledge, that is, knowledge of what ought to be according to eternal reasons. The actuating principle of the reality of the human soul, therefore, is not an achievement but a dynamic norm. To rest in eternal reasons, "is not a vision of God but a participation and similitude of him by which we grasp first principles and judge all things by examining them in the light of principles."[93]

Faith, as the gift of the Holy Spirit, involves contact with human reason. Theology expresses the wisdom of faith in judgments that impact on other sciences. Lonergan memorably describes this as "a further wisdom attained through the supernatural light of faith, when the humble surrender of our own light to the self-revealing uncreated Light makes the latter the loved law of all our assents."[94]

Lonergan asks whether or to what extent Aquinas is influenced by mystical experience in his understanding of the concept of *imago Dei*. Religious experience is involved in that the data under consideration is data of revelation that must be received in religious conversion. Aquinas, however, was not exclusively mystical in his approach. He was interested in nature and the sciences and argued that the *imago Dei* was in all persons, whether saints or sinners. Lonergan, therefore, concludes that the basis for Aquinas's understanding of processions in God is essentially psychological rather than mystical. Religious experience

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[92] *Verbum,* 100-101
[93] *Verbum,* 101, n203. The citation is from *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8c.
[94] *Verbum,* 101.

and spiritual gifts of graces and understanding may lead to developments in wisdom and love, but they are accidental. The essence of what is developed is the nature of being human.[95]

In summary, Lonergan's judgment of the cumulative textual evidence indicates that Aquinas' own self-knowledge was crucial in arriving at his understanding of the procession of an inner word in the intellect. It is possible for people of any era to reflect on their own experience of inquiry, insight and its utterance or formulation, and judgments that result in knowledge. That is the only way to attain self-knowledge and, Lonergan argues, must have been the experience of Aquinas.

The conclusion that a core psychological content exists in Aquinas has to be demonstrated as consistent with his use of technical terms at the level of metaphysics. It was to this question that Lonergan turned in his third article, also chapter three of *Verbum*.

## 2.8 Metaphysics – Aquinas' use of technical terms, categories and theorems

Lonergan acknowledges that statements about *verbum* and the procession of an inner word in Aquinas are related within a systematic framework. The key terms relate to the notion of procession and refer to capacities to act, operate, receive, and understand and the notions of object, nature and efficiency. Determining the precise meaning of the terms and explaining their relations is a complex task. Lonergan attributes the complexity, firstly, to the need for discernment of how Aquinas' thought developed over time. Secondly, there are difficulties of translation arising from the dependence on Aristotle. Aristotle adapted terms to suit his own purposes and the history of translation from Greek to Latin, mediated by Arabic

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[95] *Verbum,* 102-104.

culture, resulted in imperfect early Latin translations. While these were later revised with direct translations from the Greek, terminological imprecision is common. Thirdly, there has been a long history of study of Aquinas in which, through ignorance about literary and historical research, a tendency towards speculative invention at the level of metaphysics has meant the intention of Aquinas has been overlaid by interpretation.

Lonergan describes his own work as "an effort to cut through this jungle".[96] He was able to assume his detailed comments would be followed because, in the 1940's, his readers would have been familiar with Thomist metaphysics. As a system of thought it is remote from contemporary approaches to comprehending reality. This becomes apparent in discussion of questions posed in the formal academic manner of the time. As indicated above, Thomist metaphysics is basically Aristotelian in seeking to know 'causes' as intelligible relationships of dependence. To establish whether Lonergan's major theses about *verbum* in Aquinas can be sustained, it is necessary to follow his argument as he sets about carving a way through the "jungle".

### 2.8.1 *processio*

The term *processio* (procession) besides its simple meaning of movement is also applied, more generally, to 'everything in which there is some relation of a thing to another as being from it or after it'.[97] For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, procession occurs as a result of some action as origin of movement.

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[96] *Verbum,* 10.
[97] *Verbum,* 108, n7, citation from *De Potentia,* q. 10, a. I c.

Lonergan regards a distinction between *processio operationis* and *processio operati* as crucial for understanding processions in God.[98] *Processio operationis* means a procession or emergence of perfection from (and in) what is perfected.[99] *Processio operati* refers to the production of one thing from another, an act caused by a first act.[100] Lonergan remarks

> … since in God there is no capacity to be perfected, there can be in God no possibility of a *processio operationis*, such as the procession of the act of understanding from the intellect, … Accordingly, a created analogy to the divine processions has to be sought in instances of *processio operati,* such as the procession of the inner word in the intellect.[101]

The notion of procession in God has to be understood as *processio operati* – the emergence of one thing from another, an act from act. That this holds for the second procession means that, contrary to what may be expected and has often been asserted, the procession in the will of an act of love must be understood as 'proceeding' from an inner word in the intellect. This conclusion is difficult only on the assumption of a parallel between intellect and will that requires a procession from the will equivalent to the procession of an inner word in the intellect. This is explicitly denied by Aquinas.[102] Love, as an act of will, only 'proceeds' actively towards the desired 'good' from the basis of a prior reception in the will of an inner word of judgment conceived in the intellect.

An important general implication of this conclusion is that human will is understood as not being free, in the sense of possessing absolute or arbitrary freedom. The will acts only on

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[98] *Verbum,* 107, n5. The citation is from *De Veritate*, q.4,a.2,ad 7m.
[99] 'Perfection' refers to the actuation of potential as a completion. God is perfect, complete, and cannot be 'perfected'.
[100] An example of *processio operationis* is the acquisition of a skill, such as playing a piano. Becoming a pianist is the result of achieving, over time, mastery of a combination of operations. A *processio operati* is the knowing that one has the skill to play the piano. Such knowing is dependent upon, and arises out of, the first 'act' of acquiring the necessary skills.
[101] *Verbum,*107.
[102] "There is nothing in the will that proceeds from the will itself except what proceeds in the manner of an operation." *De Veritate,* q. 4, a. 2, ad 7m. *Verbum,* 109, n17. Many further citations are given to support this statement, 109-111, n20.

what the intellect specifies or provides. The root of human freedom, therefore, is in the intellect and not in the will. This contradicts a commonly accepted assumption about freedom of will that forms the basis of many self-help manuals, voluntarism in the Christian tradition, and Nietzsche's "will to power". From the point of view of Aquinas and Lonergan they indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of being human.

### 2.8.2 *actus perfecti* (act of the complete or perfected)

An important distinction is that between movement and operation. Movement is incomplete as in Aristotle's example of the flight of an arrow. Operation is understood as completed movement that does not extend over time but is, at once, all that it is to be. An example is the experience of seeing.

The distinction between act of the incomplete (*imperfecti*) and the complete (*perfecti*) reflects the above distinction. All movement is the result of some action and, at any time during the process of *actus imperfecti,* the act is incomplete. *Actus perfecti* refers to something that exists in an act that is complete because the end of the movement coincides with the operation itself, as in the faculty of sight becoming actual seeing.

The implication drawn from this distinction is that, for Aquinas, there is not just one level at which things exist in reality but many.[103] Reality is more than may be defined as an essence. Particularly in regard to living beings, reality is also the dynamic process of movement of that which is coming to be in time (*actus imperfecti*) and the operation of essences (such as sight) in act (*actus perfecti*). To be in act is more than a defined essence – as seeing is more than sight, human life is more than the sum of various systems. This contrasts with the prevalence in current thought of a reductionist mentality that grants

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[103] *Verbum,* 115.

objective status only to the lowest levels of description of the world, that of essences defined by the natural sciences. On such a view, reality consists in ever more complex aggregates of whatever may be defined as its irreducible basic components. The operation of the human mind is then seen as 'explained' by the results of study of neural activity and biochemistry or as the natural evolutionary development of the brain.

Aquinas, following Aristotle, would view such contemporary thought as highly developed versions of a notion he considered philosophically crude. Both would argue that they had outgrown the abstract reductive view found in earlier thinkers in their variously understood basic elements. Both were concerned with the concrete variety of what actually exists. Hence the importance of giving attention to the operations actually involved in coming to know reality.

### 2.8.3 *pati* (to be moved, to receive, to suffer, to be changed…..)

While *actus imperfecti* may be easily understood as a 'being moved", a *pati*, there is great difficulty in thinking of movement in the broad sense (including *actus perfecti*) as a *pati*.

In later works Aquinas distinguishes between *pati propie* (*pati* in the proper sense) and *pati communiter* (*pati* in a most general sense).[104] *Pati communiter* is a purely metaphysical idea necessitated by the potentiality of every creature. It is somewhat less general than 'being an effect', for it presupposes a subject. It is described as *recipere* (to receive) for there seems to be a concentration on the moment of reception, but Aquinas also states:

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[104] *Verbum,* 117.

"since this *pati* involves no diminution of the recipient, it might be better named a *perfici* (perfection)." [105]

Lonergan suggests that difficulty with an operation or action as *actus perfecti* being identified as a *pati,* in the sense of a received perfection, arises when the grammatical subject 'I' in the phrase "I see" is also taken to be the efficient cause of seeing. Aristotle and Aquinas understood seeing as the operation of a passive rather than an active potency, a matter of response and of being moved.

> The question is, How can one speak of sensing in act, when one has maintained that sensing is a matter of undergoing change and being moved? For sensing in act seems to be just the opposite of being changed and being moved, namely, acting. The answer is that there is an acting which is simply being in act, and simply being in act is not opposed to being changed and being moved. On the contrary movement itself is defined as an act. If there is no difficulty about the defining movement as an act, though an imperfect one, there is no difficulty in saying that the *pati* of sensation is an act and in that sense an acting. [106]

Aquinas uses the term *operatio*, therefore, in two senses. In one, it denotes efficient causality, the operation of a mover causing an effect. In the other, operation is predicated of the moved rather than the mover. It refers to the moved 'being in act'. In the latter sense it is a *pati* or *passio* in the operating subject. Lonergan acknowledges that accepting this notion is difficult "today when people think it a contradiction in terms to speak of the operating subject as being moved."[107]

What is true of *operatio* is also true of *actio*. Potency is the principle of operation and passive potencies have *actio*, not as the exercise of efficient causality but in the sense that they are 'in act'. Both *operatio* and *actio*, in the above sense of 'being in act' in the

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[105] *Verbum,* 118, nn68-71. Lonergan cites passages from Aquinas where this understanding is explained and illustrated.
[106] *Verbum,* 119.

[107] *Verbum,* 120.

creature, are, therefore, instances of *pati communiter*. This is not simply a matter of receiving but also a perfecting of the recipient as in the case of the activation of sight in the act of seeing.

The implication of this understanding is that to be human is, firstly, to be a 'receiver'. In knowing, it is the sensed or imagined object that moves the intellect to seek understanding. In loving, we are moved to response by the other. The possession of an inner word of understanding or knowledge or of love is dependent on the other as mover. Though moved, the activation of the potency is totally the self in act or in operation. It is the self who sees, who comes to know, who is in love. Through such a 'being in act', the human subject undergoes change, becoming other than was the case before. Such an operation is the perfection of the possibility of seeing or knowing or being in love. In the terms of Aquinas, therefore, it is a *pati* in the operating subject.

Aquinas' metaphysics, while drawing heavily on Aristotle, is also informed by the faith and teachings of the Church. The doctrine of creation is fundamental to his whole approach and enables his understanding of the human as part of God's creation.[108] Lonergan's remark about those who "think it a contradiction in terms to speak of the operating subject as being moved" may be understood as implying reference to the refusal of creature-hood that is often presupposed in assumptions about ourselves as human subjects 'in act'. To consider our potencies as activated by an 'other' is to call attention to our dependence and the interdependence of created realities when we might prefer to attend to our capacities and assert independence and control. The assumption that when we 'see' we are the

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[108] This is illustrated in the *Summa theologiae* where the discussion of human beings (I 1, qq. 75-102) follows that on Creation and its order (qq. 44-74).

efficient cause of our own seeing involves oversight of the prior movement of reception that activates the sensation and operation of seeing. Similarly, the act of understanding that is prior to the formulation of a concept is easily overlooked. Again, the exercise of the will as an inner movement that controls and effects change is often recognised, while the role of the intellect in specifying an object as good, which causes the will to pursue such a good in act, can be overlooked.

In Lonergan's own (later) terms, methodically prior to my knowing, choosing and acting there exists the dynamic structure of my human conscious intentionality. Recognition of our dependence on being moved by an 'other' leads to awareness of our essential relatedness to all else that exists and, consequently, to questions about the source, purpose and goal of our existence. Our natural intending is towards a self-transcendence that is cognitive, moral and religious and is always a response to an 'other'. That is how we are made.

### 2.8.4 *potentia activa* (active potency)

Lonergan indicates that there are complex terminological difficulties with respect to this concept. He concludes that Aquinas had two distinct definitions of *potentia activa* and was able to move between them without difficulty, the context determining which is in use, and characterises them as Aristotelian and Avicennist.[109]

Briefly stated, the Aristotelian *potentia activa* is the principle of an act in the other or in self as other. Lonergan uses the phrase "efficient potency" to indicate it. Its corresponding

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[109] The latter because of parallels found in Avicenna, the Persian physician and philosopher (980-1037) whose commentaries on Aristotle were influential at the time. Averroists held that there is only one active or agent intellect and that all people participate in one and the same reality. Aquinas' main response was to point out that it was individual persons who actually reach understanding.

*potentia passiva* is described as "receptive potency" because Aristotelian definitions, in which both terms require each other, are the basis of argument. For example, in the process of heating, the capacity to produce and potency to receive heat must both be present.

The Avicennist *potentia activa* is the principle of an act in the selfsame. Lonergan uses the phrase "active potency" to indicate its meaning, as simply the principle of an action or operation. Its corresponding *potentia passiva* is "passive potency", a potency to receive form. It may or may not involve an effect beyond itself. Aquinas also takes account of Aristotle's understanding of the natural as "the principle of movement and rest in a thing in which it is found primarily and per se, and not accidently."[110] A significant example of a 'nature' operating, that Lonergan gave in a lecture some thirty years later, is that of the raising and answering of questions in a human subject. "As raising questions, it is an immanent principle of movement. As answering questions and doing so satisfactorily, it is an immanent principle of rest.[111] Because such movement is internal, it follows that nature is not a matter of efficient and receptive potency. Neither is it a thing, but rather form as principle of movement in the matter of a thing. Active and passive potencies may be regarded as subdivisions within 'natural potency' in the operation of a subject that contributes to its act. There is an apparent paradox in that active and passive potencies as subdivisions of natural potency are both receptive. The paradox is only apparent because what is opposed to receptive potency is efficient potency and not a subdivision of natural potency.

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[110] *Verbum,* 122, n92. The citation is from Aristotle, *Physics,* II, I, 192b 21-22.
[111] Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. S.J. F.E. Crowe (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985). 172.

The distinction of two meanings to the term *potentia activa* that Lonergan identifies as efficient/receptive potency and active/passive potency follows closely the distinctions already drawn between the two types of *actus* and *processio* previously discussed. A lack of understanding of this important distinction can lead to assumptions being made about the presence of efficient causality without consideration of the possibility of active potencies being receptive and a *pati*. This is another manifestation of a basic failure to take account of the psychological content of metaphysical terminology. It excludes the possibility of an act of receiving that occurs intelligently and consciously as in the pre-conceptual act of understanding.

### 2.8.5 *duplex actio* (twofold action)

Aquinas frequently distinguishes two types of action. "There is an act that remains in the agent and is the perfection of the agent; there is another act that goes forth into external matter and effects a change in it."[112] The two types of act are associated because it is form that is the principle both of the act remaining in the agent and of the act that goes forth.

> In the *Physics* it was pointed out that the mover possesses a form which is principle of movement; for it is a man in act that makes a man out of what is a man only in potency.
>
> But form is not only the ground of efficiency but also of the principle of operation. … Such operation is the end of the operator and more perfect than his form; it is what is last and most perfect in each thing, and so is compared to form as act to potency, as second act to first act.[113]

A twofold action, in which a second act arises directly as an effect from a first act, is essential to the distinction between *processio operationis* and *processio operati*. An act that remains in the agent, and proceeds from form or informed potency, is a *processio operationis* that is the perfection of the agent. An act that does not involve movement and

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[112] *Verbum,* 130.
[113] *Verbum,* 131.

remains within the agent is the basis for concluding that there is a *processio operati* of the inner word within the intellect. Aquinas described the action of God causing grace in the soul to be an instance of an act that does not involve movement. Lonergan cites the "tart observation" of Aquinas that this is "a point which those who are unable to get their minds off actions that involve movements find very hard to understand".[114] Associating action with movement leads to the assumption of efficient causality when this may not the case.

### 2.8.6 *species, intelligere*

Lonergan's primary interest is in specifying the relationship of *species* with *intelligere*. *Species* translates Aristotle's *eidos* (form) and shares its ambiguity. "It may mean form and then it includes neither common nor individual matter; and it may mean a universal, and then it includes common but not individual matter."[115] He regards the relation as expressed in two different manners corresponding to the Avicennist definition of *potentia activa* ('active/passive potency') and the Aristotelian concept of form as natural potency.[116]

Aquinas saw a parallel between active potency as principle of action or operation in virtue of form and *species* as the formal principle by which intellect is actuated to understand. Also as passive potency is potency to reception of form, and contrasts with active potency to operation and action, so there is a parallel contrast between reception of *species* (a *passio*) and the subsequent *operatio,* which is an *actus perfecti. Species,* as the form that actuates the intellect and is its principle of action is contrasted with the inner word resulting from the action. An illustration used by Aquinas is that of form as "the principle of the act

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[114] *Verbum,* 132, n153.
[115] *Verbum,* 133.
[116] *Verbum,* 134-135.

of understanding and the thought out form of a house which is the term of an act of understanding and, as it were, its effect."[117]

Lonergan concludes that a correct understanding of Aquinas will recognise that he distinguished two meanings in regard to the operation of the intellect and these are discerned in the terms *intelligere* and *dicere*.

> Finally, while we have seen that the terms *operatio* and *actio* sometimes mean simply act or being in act and sometimes mean the exercise of efficient causality, we now find that the precision of trinitarian theory led Aquinas to distinquish exactly between these two meanings with regard to the operation or action of intellect; when that operation is meant in the sense of act, it is termed *intelligere*; but when by operation is meant that one act is grounding another, it is termed *dicere*.[118]

Aquinas' use of an Aristotelian scheme of analysis (efficient and receptive potencies) confirms "why the procession of the act of understanding is only a '*processio operationis*', while the procession of the act of defining or of judging is a '*processio operati*'."[119]

Lonergan cites a passage from *De Veritate* as an example of Aquinas arguing in conformity with Aristotelian thought.

> The form received in something does not move the thing that receives it; but just to have that form is itself to have been moved; but the thing is moved by an external agent; just as a body which is heated by fire is not moved by the heat it receives but by the fire. So too intellect is not moved by the species it has already received, nor by the truth which is the result of that species; but by some external thing which leaves an impression on the intellect, as for example agent intellect, or phantasm, or something else of that nature.[120]

The argument pursued here is that while *species* as form actuates the intellect, the *species* received in the intellect does not move the intellect to understanding. In other words, *species* is not the efficient cause of insight. It is some external thing, the object of understanding (phantasm) that instrumentally produces both the *species* and the act of

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[117] *Verbum,* 136.
[118] *Verbum,* 136.
[119] *Verbum,* 137.
[120] ———, *Verbum.,* 136, n175. The citation is from *De Veritate,* q. 22, a.5, ad 8m.

understanding. This is unlike the object of conceiving or defining produced by the insight. Aquinas repeatedly distinguished between the principle of action or operation and the principle of an effect. It does not follow that because *species* is the principle of operation that it must be principle of the effect.

Lonergan's statement that 'the precision of trinitarian theory led Aquinas to distinguish exactly between these two meanings' is an indication that theological insights provided distinctions important for understanding the operation of the intellect. While response to the truth of faith is far more than an intellectual assent, it has an intellectual component and consequences. That component, as known, becomes knowledge acquired through belief. Thus in his *Summa theologiae* Aquinas begins from his knowledge of what can (and cannot) be said about God on the basis of the doctrines of the Church and the use of reason. Discussion of creation precedes discussion of the place of human beings within creation. This systematic approach situates humankind within a series of larger contexts and in relation to God. Aquinas was able to confidently embark on a holistic approach in which theological distinctions informed self-knowledge of the operation of the intellect.

### 2.8.7 Object

The importance of the distinction between Avicennist and Aristotelian schemes of analysis of *potentia activa* becomes fully apparent in considering Aquinas' use of the term 'object'. The Aristotelian method of determining the nature of souls – the distinction of their essences depends on the distinction of their potencies, potencies on their acts, acts on their objects - means that distinction of objects is crucial to understanding Aquinas.

The relation of object to act is described by Aquinas as varying in relation to the kind of potency that is brought to act. In the Aristotelian analysis, if the potency is efficient, the act

produces the object but, if the potency is receptive, the object produces the act. In Lonergan's opinion, the latter "has been forced into oblivion by neglect of the Aristotelian scheme of analysis with a consequent misinterpretation of the Avicennist scheme."[121] He cites instances where Aquinas refers to an act that is a reception and its object is its mover.[122] In such passages, using the Avicennist (active/passive potency) scheme, "Aquinas argues that "the object of the passive potency is active, not with respect to the *species* alone, but with respect to the act, the action, the operation of the potency."[123] This corresponds with Lonergan's conclusions on *actus perfecti, pati, potentia activa*, and *duplex actio*.

The object as active is easily understood in regard to the operation of the senses. In sensation the object is active, not merely in that it causes the *species*, but also in that it causes the operation of the sensitive potency. The object in an act of seeing, therefore, is the cause of both the act of seeing and the particular image (*species*) of the object that is received in the intellect. In similar fashion, in Lonergan's understanding of Aquinas, the possible intellect is a passive potency able to receive the species through the object of understanding (the phantasm). It is that object that produces both the *species* and the act of understanding. At the same time the act of understanding is also the receptive act of the person coming to understand. There is a *pati* in sensation and the intellect in so far as there is reception.

Lonergan indicates that Aquinas also maintained that *velle* (to will) also can be a *pati*. In respect of the grace of God and human will, grace is operative and human will is *mota et*

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[121] *Verbum,* 138.
[122] *Verbum,* 139-140, nn186-189.
[123] *Verbum,* 1997 #3}, 140.

*non movens* (moved and not moving).  This leads to another important distinction in that, in respect of desiring the good as an end, "the will moves itself only inasmuch as it is in act with respect to the end, but to that end it is moved by an external principle, God."[124]  The human response is to a divine initiative, whether that is recognised or not.

### 2.8.8 Nature and Efficiency

Aristotelian influence meant that formal causality, the *causa essendi,* the cause of being, had a preponderant role for Aquinas.  Form is also the act of some agent operating towards a goal or end.  Form, therefore, has two effects, being and operation.  Lonergan argues that

> It is in this sense of formal cause and formal effect that one has to understand the statement in the *De Veritate*: action and passion are confined to the production and reception of species; the act of understanding follows upon that action or passion as effect follows cause.[125]

Considering the question of whether such cause and effect are formal or efficient, Lonergan cites evidence that Aquinas understood the emanation of proper accidents from substance as a natural resultance rather than in terms of efficient causality.[126]  The effect of the natural potency of sight is experienced as the operating of the subject but this is not efficient causality but a natural resultance.  The same kind of analysis is applied to the operation of the intellect and the will but is more complex, particularly in the intellect where both the possible intellect and the agent intellect are involved.

Therefore, while the subject operates in sensation, intellect, and will, this is not efficient causality but natural potency that is receptive and moved to act as the act of the subject. The difficulty that Aquinas recognised in God moving the will to the act of willing the end was not that human beings must be the efficient cause of their own act of willing but that

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[124] *Verbum,* 143.
[125] *Verbum,* 144, n217.
[126] *Verbum,* 145, n224.

the act must not be violent but natural.[127]  Lonergan responds to the question of what the

human will contributes when moved by God as follows:

> It operates.  It wills. In this case the operation is an *operatio receptiva*, just as *sentire* is a *pati* of sense and just as *intelligere* is a *pati* of the possible intellect.  The will operates inasmuch as it is the will that is actuated.  The will contributes inasmuch as an act received in the will has to be a 'willing', not because it is act, nor merely because of the extrinsic mover, but proximately because act is limited by the potency in which it is received.[128]

It (willing) is thus experienced as the natural act of the recipient subject in the same way

that seeing is the natural act of the potency of sight.

The distinction between efficient and natural potency, as the difference between the

principle of movement in the other or in self as other and the principle of movement in the

selfsame, is important in understanding the relation of metaphysics to psychology in

Aquinas.  A failure to distinguish them, according to Lonergan,

> … results in a negation of the division of objects into agent and terminal, and the elimination of the agent object provides a metaphysical scheme into which Thomist psychology does not fit; further, natural potency which, though receptive, nonetheless makes a most significant contribution to its act, tends to disappear to be replaced by efficient forms and habits in need of a divine *praemotio physica* which …. cannot be said to be a doctrine stated or implied by Aquinas;[129]

This description depicts significant misinterpretations of Aquinas that adversely affected

Catholic theology from the mediaeval period until the twentieth century.  Lonergan's

attempt to establish "what the *vetera* really were" brought a new perspective to

understanding Aquinas on the operations of the human mind in coming to understanding

and knowledge.  It is now appropriate to summarise the conclusions that the study has thus

far reached from both the psychological and metaphysical perspectives.

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[127] *Verbum,* 146-147, nn232-233.
[128] *Verbum,* 147.
[129] *Verbum,* 149.

## 2.9  Conclusions – Metaphysics and Psychology

The general conclusion is that of coherence between understandings at the levels of metaphysics and psychology.  In Lonergan's terms, "the metaphysical analysis is but the more general form of the psychological analysis."[130]  It is Lonergan's discernment of crucial distinctions operating in Aquinas that enables a reconciliation of metaphysics and psychology.

- The distinction between *processio operationis* and *processio operati* as the distinction between an act that is the emergence of a perfection from, and in, what is perfected and an act as the emergence of one thing from another.

- The distinction between the Aristotelian (efficient/receptive potencies in the other or self as other) and Avicennist (active/passive potencies in the selfsame) schemes of analysis in respect of understanding the possible relations of object to act.  This distinction enables understanding of how an act can be a reception and its object be its mover.

- The distinction between agent intellect and possible intellect is that between efficient and natural potency.  In the possible intellect, passive potency (as a subdivision of natural potency) is moved to operate when something is being learned for the first time.  Active potency is moved to operate when something is already understood.  The following table sets out the analysis of the intellect in the direct act of understanding that Lonergan finds in Aquinas.

**HUMAN INTELLECT**

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[130] *Verbum,* 150.

| agent intellect<br>*potens omnia facere*<br>an **efficient potency** that produces | possible intellect<br>*potens omnia fieri*<br>a **natural potency** that receives |
| --- | --- |
| **wonder**, inquiry<br>**illuminates** phantasms and transforms them from mere presentations to agent objects of intellect. | as **passive** – reception of *species*/form for the first time<br>as **active** – re-actualizing what is already understood |

- The distinction between *intelligere* and *dicere* is a distinction between the two meanings of action or operation. *Intelligere* is the emergence of understanding in the intellect and is a *processio operationis* as it completes or perfects a natural potency. *Dicere* is an act arising from the act of *intelligere* that produces a definition or concept. Being the operation of an effect it is a *processio operati*.

The following pattern of operations of the intellect has been discerned.

1. A question arises out of the natural potency to wonder.

2. A phantasm (image) is received in the sensitive or imaginative potency.

3. Agent intellect illuminates the phantasm. Phantasm becomes the agent object of intellect.

4. Phantasm, as agent object and instrument of agent intellect, moves the possible intellect to an act (*intelligere*) that is the reception of *species* (as form plus common matter) as something understood.

5. Agent intellect further acts, out of the act of *intelligere*, to produce the effect of conceiving (*dicere*) a definition of essence as a terminal object that is also received in the possible intellect.

6. The definition or concept spontaneously becomes the source of further inquiry as to whether it truly is so. The agent object of this operation is the relevant objective evidence of sense and empirical consciousness and all prior understanding, ordered logically and reduced to first principles.

7. Agent intellect moves the possible intellect to an act of reflective understanding that produces (*dicere*) an inner word of judgment (*iudicare*) as a terminal object. It is through that inner word that knowledge of reality is reached

As metaphysical analysis is the more general form of the psychological analysis and, for Aquinas (following Aristotle), souls are to be distinguished by potencies, potencies by their acts, and acts by their objects, an account of intellectual operations starting with objects is also possible. Lonergan provides the following succinct summary.

> The final object of the intellect is the real. The real is known through an immanent object produced by the intellect, the true. The true presupposes a more elementary immanent object also produced by the intellect, the definition. The definition is not merely utterance, *dicere*, but the utterance of intelligence in act, either in rationally conscious disregard of the irrelevant or in critical evaluation of all that is relevant, of *intelligere*. This *intelligere* can be what it is only if there are objects to move it as well as the objects that it produces. The *intelligere* that expresses itself in judgment is moved by the relevant evidence; the *intelligere* that expresses itself in definition is moved by the illuminated phantasm. But evidence as relevant and phantasm as illuminated are not mere sensible data; hence besides the sensitive potencies and the possible intellect there is needed an agent intellect.[131]

In any puzzling toward new understanding, all prior understanding and judgments directly influence the possible intellect. In coming to know any new thing, whatever we have come to know (or think we know) becomes as first act to a second act. This is why it is important to develop good habits with respect to the operation of the intellect if we are to become wise and in touch with reality rather than merely playing around with ideas. It is also why

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[131] *Verbum,* 150.

it is so difficult to unlearn what has already been learned. What is already known can prevent the occurrence of new acts of understanding that are the only starting point toward further knowledge of reality.

Lonergan's consideration, at the level of metaphysics, of Aquinas on the relation of word and idea concludes with an analysis of his understanding of the process of 'abstraction'. Clarity on the meaning of the term is necessary because the intellectualist position of Aquinas is in marked contrast to the commonly accepted position that regards the formation or abstraction of concepts as the starting point for arriving at understanding and knowledge.

## *2.10 Abstraction*

### 2.10.1 Introduction

Abstraction refers to the spontaneous abstracting, in the process of coming to know, of that which is essential to understanding from that which is incidental. In the Scholastic tradition it was understood to occur in three degrees, thus providing a basis for the distinctions between science, mathematics and metaphysics. [132]

Critical to Lonergan's understanding of Aquinas' intellectualist position is the distinction of pre-conceptual understanding from its linguistic expression and the priority of the former over the latter. The contrasting position regards the abstraction of concepts as forming basic units of knowledge. From such a viewpoint, the manner of the appearance in the mind of such concepts is unimportant because the focus is on understanding their connections and relations. Intelligence is applied to concepts, but concepts are not regarded as the product of intelligence but as arising spontaneously. The notion of abstraction is

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[132] The notion of three degrees of abstraction was briefly described earlier from a primarily psychological perspective under heading 2.4.3. *emanatio intelligibilis* p55 above.

then associated with a thought process of reduction in which inessential data is removed in order to concentrate on characteristics necessary for something to be understood. It gives rise to negative connotations expressed as general distaste for excessive withdrawal into a rarefied realm of speculative thought far removed from present practical concerns. On Lonergan's reading of Aquinas, the reason for abstraction is the addition of understanding to experience, of the intelligible to the concrete. Withdrawal into thought, therefore, is never an end in itself but expressly for the purpose of return to the present situation and questions.

### 2.10.2 The Analogy of Matter

The intellectualist position of Aquinas was essentially derived from Aristotle who argued, contrary to materialists, that matter cannot be the basic substance of the universe because it is always subject to change. As Lonergan states, for Aristotle, "the ultimate subject of change could not be an assignable object …. nor any other determinate reality; it could not, of itself, be knowable; its nature could be stated only by recourse to analogy."[133] The analogy, exemplified in the relationship of bronze to a statue, was the relation of anything material and formless to a form. From this there developed the notion of 'formless matter', later known as prime matter (*materia prima*).[134] For Aristotle, therefore, the term 'substance' referred to the form that makes matter into a determinate object. Substantial form is known by the intellect, not by the senses, and prime matter is understood as proportionate to substantial form.

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[133] *Verbum,* 154, nn 11-12. Aristotle's discussion takes place in *Metaphysics,* Book 7.
[134] *Verbum,* 154, n.13

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Following Aristotle, Aquinas understood the principle of knowing material things to be a generalisation of the analogy of matter. In matter there is a 'form', an intelligible component, that can be 'abstracted', that is, identified and known by the intellect as the 'cause' or nature of the thing. The general principle is expressed in the analogy that natural form stands to natural matter as the object of insight (intelligible form) stands to the object of sense (sensible matter).[135] The former relation is at the level of metaphysics and the latter provides the basis for psychological description.

Metaphysically, a material entity is understood as having an intelligible form that is known through acts of understanding. What is thus known is real, having existence in itself and as other than the knower. This contrasts with theories that regard what is known through understanding as ideal rather than real. On such a view, ideas as a product of mind remain in the knower and do not reach the ontological reality of the object known. For Aquinas, abstraction of form from matter is knowledge of the intelligible unity of particular matter. As such, it is knowledge of a universal in the particular and is not confined to the knower.

Further, the act of knowing is itself an ontological reality. Aristotle had argued that knowing involves an identity in act between the known and the knower, between the form of the thing known and the form of the knowing. This identity in act is an extension of the theorem of the identity of action and passion, where the same act is act in the agent and a being moved (*pati*) in the recipient. Thus, sounding and hearing, are not two realities but one.[136] Aquinas succinctly expressed this in the statement that 'the thing sensed in act is

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[135] *Verbum,* 155, n 20 and 186, n 193. The citation is from *De Veritate,* q.10, a 8, ad 1m.
[136] *Verbum,* 158-159, nn28-33.

the sense in act, the intelligible in act is the intellect in act'.[137]  His understanding of this

identity in act was that of an assimilation of the species by the intellect.[138]  This

assimilation is necessarily not on the level of matter but an immaterial reception, otherwise

the knower would be the known.

### 2.10.3 The Immateriality of Knowing and the Intentional Mode

While operation of senses provides an illustration for the operation of intellect, differences

between intellect and sensation are evident in that sensation, for Aquinas, involves the

operation of a material compound (an organ and a potency) whereas the operation of

intellect involves an immaterial compound.   Lonergan cites a series of statements by

Aquinas to the effect that:

> possible intellect is not the form of any sense organ; it has no other nature but ability to receive;
> it stands to intelligible forms as prime matter stands to all sensible forms; and precisely because
> it is in act none of the things to be known, it offers no subjective resistance to objective
> knowing. [139]

Lonergan warns that there are many difficulties if the general theorem of knowledge by

immateriality is taken out of its historical context and made a premise of dialectical

deduction.  Its primary meaning is the negative one, already stated, that the knower need

not be the known.  Assimilation, as identity in act, is necessary but it occurs on the level of

form not matter.  Out of this negative point there arises a positive meaning, that Lonergan

summarises from various statements of Aquinas, as follows:

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[137] *Verbum,* 159.
[138] Lonergan cites *Summa theologiae,* I, q. 87, a.1, ad 3m. "We have to say that this statement of the
Philosopher is universally true in every intellect. For as a sense in act is the sensible thing because of its
likeness to that sensible thing, which likeness is the form of the sense in act, so the understanding in act is the
understood in act because of the likeness to the thing understood, which likeness is the form of the
understanding in act." *Verbum,* 159, n35.
[139] *Verbum,* 160-161, nn44-51.

The form of the knowing must be similar to the form of the known, but also it must be different; it must be similar essentially for the known to be known; but it must differ modally for the knower to know and not merely be known. Modal difference of forms results from difference in recipients: the form of colour exists naturally in the wall but intentionally in the eye because wall and eye are different kinds of recipient; …. Thus the negative concept 'immateriality' acquires a positive content of intentional existence; and intentional existence is a modal difference resulting from difference in the recipient.[140]

Lonergan argues that the reason Aquinas describes forms as having modal differences, either natural or intentional according to the difference in recipients, is because his whole system conceives perfection as totality. If finite beings are somehow to approximate to perfection, they must be capable in some manner of also being others as others. This distinguishing of an intentional mode of existence is another important distinction necessary for understanding Aquinas. Intentionality is evident in the directedness of mind that considers objects. To think at all is to think about something. Natural existence is being oneself. Intentional existence is being the other as other. Thus while potency and matter are principles of limitation, "tying things down to being merely the things they are, it follows that the intentional mode of existence results from the negation of potency and specifically negation of matter."[141] For Lonergan, the perspective of such systematic principles is essential for a correct understanding of knowledge by immateriality.

### 2.10.4 Formative and Apprehensive Abstraction

Variations occur in the psychological description of abstraction of intelligibility "because the object of insight is the object of pre-conceptual knowing."[142] Any expression of the object of insight is necessarily as conceived and, therefore, is not the object of insight as such. Lonergan's understanding is that, for Aquinas, formative abstraction (or the

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[140] *Verbum,* 162. The citations from Aquinas are *II De Anima,* lect.24, 551-554, *Summa contra Gentiles,* 2, c.50, 5, *Summa theologiae,* I, q.56. a.2c.
[141] *Verbum,* 162.
[142] *Verbum,* 187.

formation of concepts) is the result of prior objective and apprehensive abstraction. In the experience of the one coming to understanding there is an objective abstraction in the raising of questions that anticipate an intelligibility to be understood. There is data and a question or questions, and the sifting of what is necessary for understanding is abstracted from a residue that is unnecessary and simply happens to be given.

Apprehensive abstraction is equated with insights as acts of pre-conceptual understanding. Insights are into phantasms, that is, sensible or imagined presentations of data. The object of understanding (variously termed as form, species or quiddity) is present in, but distinct from, the phantasm. It is apprehended in the phantasm as a grasp of the intelligible in the sensible. Apprehensive abstraction thus results in the addition of intelligibility to data.

Formative abstraction proceeds from apprehensive abstraction as an act of meaning or defining that is a *processio operati*. Pre-conceptual understanding (*intelligere*) becomes *dicere* and what is understood and conceived is a conceptual formulation of the intelligibility in the data. Verification or refinement of conceptual formulations requires return to the evidence of the data. The purpose of formulating abstract ideas and relations is thus shown to be adding the enrichment of understanding to the concrete and particular, rather than reducing concrete reality to a rarefied realm of ideas.

### 2.10.5 Conclusion

Lonergan points out that, for Aquinas, knowledge of the concrete singular is not a matter of rational deduction from knowing a universal to knowing a proportionate singularity.[143] It is fundamentally a matter of understanding acts of understanding. Because understanding is

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[143] *Verbum,* 181.

initially through insight into phantasm, what is intended is a singular object apprehended from the data of sense or consciousness. There is a great difference between imagination as pure reverie and imagination's role in coming to understanding, when the imagined object is specifically something to be understood. As Lonergan argues:

> insights into phantasm are not insights into the nature of acts of imagination but insights into the nature of what imagination presents; as Aquinas put it, insight into phantasm is like looking in, not looking at, a mirror.[144]

This approach to abstraction that Lonergan discovers in Aquinas (and Aristotle) is in marked contrast to that from a conceptualist viewpoint. The underlying basis of conceptualism will be identified and contrasted with the intellectualist position in the following chapter.

Lonergan demonstrates that the notion of knowledge by immateriality in Aquinas has a basis in Aristotle, for whom the unmoved mover was *noesis noeseos*.[145] From an intellectualist standpoint this ought to be translated as 'understanding (of) understanding' rather than 'knowing knowing'. Lonergan comments that Aristotle "extrapolated from insight into phantasm to posit pure understanding unlimited by sensible presentation."[146] Aquinas describes God as *ipsum intelligere* (understanding itself) since there is no potency in God and God is 'pure act'.[147]

The question of the relation of Aquinas' understanding of the operations of the intellect and the distinctions made in Trinitarian doctrine remains to be considered. The following section will consider the manner in which Aquinas approached theology and, particularly, the question of processions in the Trinity.

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[144] *Verbum,* 183. The citation from Aquinas is from *De veritate*, q.2, a.6c.
[145] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 12:9, 1074b, 34, also 12:7, 1072b, 14-29.
[146] *Verbum,*196.
[147] *Summa theologiae,* I, q.14, a.2.

## *2.11 Aquinas on the Trinitarian processions and imago Dei*

### 2.11.1 Theology as a science

In the first pages of *Verbum,* Lonergan briefly outlined the possibility that difficulties in understanding processions in God were associated with neglect or misunderstanding of Aquinas on the nature of processions in the intellect.[148] If processions in God are to be understood analogously through understanding processions in the intellect, it follows that they also provide the analogue for understanding the *imago Dei*. For Lonergan, this was "the central issue both in Aquinas's thought on *verbum* and, as well, in our inquiry."[149] It is also central to the concern of this thesis to understand the conditions of the possibility of the human relation to God. In *Verbum,* Lonergan's main interest is in arriving at a correct understanding of Aquinas on the divine processions. Questions of historical development arise only with respect to developments in the thought of Aquinas and his sources.

A clear indication of Aquinas' approach to theology is given in the first pages of the *Summa theologiae,* which was intended as a manual of theology "to instruct beginners".[150] The 'beginners' would have been students trained in philosophy and studying scripture and theology. It begins with a 'Treatise on God' and the first question is that of "The Nature and Extent of Sacred Doctrine". The first article is headed by the question "*Whether, besides philosophy, any further doctrine is required?*" The question indicates the momentous change that had taken place in the type of question that had to be addressed in the thirteenth century in comparison to the questions of the Patristic era. Whether philosophy is all-sufficient had replaced Tertullian's "What has Athens to do with

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[148] *Verbum,* 13.
[149] *Verbum,* 192.
[150] *Summa theologiae*, Prologue.

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Jerusalem?" The response of Aquinas to the question of his time was that knowledge revealed by God is required to supplement naturally acquired knowledge because the end to which God calls us is beyond the grasp of natural reason. Further, if there were only philosophy, truths would be learned by only a few over a long period and inevitably be mingled with error.

The concern of subsequent articles (2-10) in the first question is the relation of revelation to theology and theology to philosophy. Aquinas concludes that theology is a science but that its principles cannot be demonstrated because they are a matter of faith. As science, theology is a subordinate science (as defined by Aristotle) in that "it proceeds from principles established by a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed."[151] Revelation is the source of such knowledge of that 'higher' or 'sacred' science as human beings are able to receive. He acknowledges that arguments based on authority are normally the weakest but they become the strongest when God is the authority. The terms 'sacred scripture', 'doctrine of the faith' and 'sacred doctrine' are used to denote the content of revealed knowledge.

All that human reason can achieve is to argue from cause and effect. Identification of an effect, such as the being of the world, is held to demonstrate the necessary existence of some agent, 'whom all call God'. While such arguments enable talk about God, they provide no assistance in comprehending God but simply demonstrate the existence of a mystery. God is the only source of knowledge of God. Only after completing the Treatise on God does Aquinas turn to God as Trinity and the question of Trinitarian processions. To

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[151] *Summa theologiae*, I, q.1, a.2.

Lonergan's analysis of the approach and conclusions of Aquinas in that regard we now turn.

### 2.11.2 God as *ipsum intelligere*

For Aquinas, God is a profound mystery. Even though it is possible to conceive God as universal first cause and as pure act, the mystery remains. Human beings can know only that which is proportionate to finite material being. [152] Anything we can know of God, even that which is revealed, must speak of God in terms accessible to human knowing. Knowledge of God, therefore, is always knowledge in relation to us and necessarily analogical. Terms are applied to God, such as 'good' or 'wise', which are not claims to direct knowledge of God's essence but are attributed because of their meaning for us. It is not possible to have a concept of God or to conceive how there can be a Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are One God. All that can be done on the level of human reason is to demonstrate that such terms and statements are not nonsense or contradictory, as would be the case if it were claimed that God is one and simple and also three Gods.

The following general statements are then possible. From God as 'pure act' it follows that God's knowledge is perfect and continually in act. Because knowing is essentially by identity, it may also be inferred that God knows Godself and all things actual or possible through Godself. Because knowing intends or desires the thing known as end, the

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[152] The Aristotelian influenced framework, adopted and adapted by Aquinas, posited a hierarchy of living beings that, in descending order, ranged from God to angelic to human to animal to plant life. God as universal first cause and *actus purus et perfectus* (pure act) has no potency or matter. Angels have potency and act but no matter, and therefore, have the potency of an immaterial being that includes rationality. Humans have matter, potency and act. Potency is limited by matter and includes the functioning of biological processes, sensitive potencies and rationality. With the exception of rationality, animals have the same potency as humans. Humans, therefore, are "a little lower than the elohim" (Ps 8:5) and a little higher than the beasts.

existence of will is implied in all knowing. God's infinite knowing is also an infinite

willing of the good, so love is the fundamental relation of God to the world.[153]

When Aquinas speaks of God as *ipsum intelligere,* therefore, Lonergan maintains that the

analogy must be to understanding. It cannot be analogous to conception because *dicere* is

analogous to conception. *Intelligere,* as the originating act of understanding, analogously

applied to divine knowing means that "there is a divine knowing prior, in the order of our

conception, to the divine utterance of *verbum* … and that prior knowing … cannot be

conceptual."[154] It follows, therefore, that *intelligere* is the essential act common to the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and that *dicere* is a notional act and proper only to the

Father. Lonergan's summation of Aquinas on the implications of God the Holy Trinity as

*ipsum intelligere* is that:

> *ipsum intelligere* is analogous to understanding, that God is an infinite and substantial act of
> understanding, that as the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, so also each is
> one and the same infinite and substantial act of understanding, finally that, though each is the
> pure act of understanding, still only the Father understands as uttering the Word.[155]

The importance of understanding *intelligere* as a pre-conceptual act of understanding and

*dicere* as the conceptualization is thus accentuated by this outline of Aquinas' position.

### 2.11.3 The Necessity of the Inner Word

In discussing the necessity of the inner word*,* Lonergan is not referring to the simple

necessity of an utterance (*dicere*) to give expression to what has been understood

(*intelligere*). Neither is he concerned with the necessity of an inner word in God because

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[153] *Verbum,*196-198.
[154] *Verbum,* 198.
[155] *Verbum,* 198-199.

"whatever is in God is necessary."[156]  The concern is with the necessity, in regard to our proportionate knowledge, of an inner word in divine self-knowledge.

It has been demonstrated that, for Aquinas, the inner word mediates between understanding and external things.  Understanding such mediation involves comparison between the object of human understanding and external things.  That which is understood is the intelligibility of the object.  Because intelligibility is of form plus common matter it prescinds from individual matter and the contingent.[157]  The necessity of the inner word, therefore, is the necessity of effecting the transition from the intelligibility understood to the actual object as existing.[158]  This is the transition effected in the process of coming to knowledge of reality that Lonergan outlines as operating in Aquinas.  The first transition is in conception, where there is a movement from *intelligere* to *dicere*, the conceptual objectification of that understanding.  It is a transition from identity to confrontation with a conceived object of thought.  The second transition is from a universal to a particular object of thought through reflection on phantasm "that enables one to mean, though not understand nor explanatorily define, the material singular."[159]  In the final step, a reflective act of understanding assesses all the relevant data, sensible and intelligible, to arrive at a judgment through which concrete reality is known.

Because we are dealing with analogous understanding, it is not possible to demonstrate by natural reason from the premise of divine self-knowledge to the existence of the divine Word.  God is simply intelligible and, therefore, no distinction can be drawn between

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[156] *Verbum,* 199.
[157] See *Verbum,* 38-46 and 168-179 and sections 2.10 Abstraction and 2.4.2 Insight into Phantasm above.
[158] *Verbum,* 201.
[159] *Verbum,* 201. This transition is described and explained in *Verbum, 179-183*.

essence, existence, intellect or understanding.  There can be no contrasting of the object of

understanding with the divine essence.  Further, it cannot be argued that without an inner

word there would be no confrontation between subject and object because knowing is

primarily and essentially by identity and it cannot be demonstrated that confrontation is

essential to knowledge.[160]  Neither can the necessity of a Word in God be demonstrated by

divine knowledge of the other.  While Aquinas wrote much about the inner word in the

context of God's knowledge of the other, that is attributed by Lonergan to the influence of

Platonism on the Christian tradition.  Aquinas clearly understood that the divine essence,

understanding and Word are one and the same reality.  The human analogy of knowing the

other simply does not apply.[161]  Hence, in Lonergan's words:

> though our *intelligere* is always a *dicere*, this cannot be demonstrated of God's.  Though we can
> demonstrate that God understands, for understanding is pure perfection, still we can no more
> than conjecture the mode of divine understanding and so cannot prove that there is a divine
> Word.  Psychological trinitarian theory is not a conclusion that can be demonstrated but a
> hypothesis that squares with divine revelation without excluding the possibility of alternative
> hypotheses.[162]

Christian faith involves belief that the divine Word became fully human in Jesus Christ.

However helpful or widely accepted any analogical understanding may become, it remains

limited and provisional.

## 2.11.4 The First Procession

In Lonergan's assessment, because Aquinas accepted the Aristotelian distinction between

the operation of efficient causality and nature, he did not regard processions in God as a

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[160] *Verbum,* 201.
[161] *Verbum,* 201.
[162] *Verbum,* 204.

production resulting from the operation of cause and effect.[163]  Since procession in God cannot be accidental and originates solely in God, only the operation of nature can be analogously applied to God.

The notion of *processio operati*, previously discussed, is a development of the notion of efficient causality in allowing for the idea of production that is not 'in the other'. [164]  It is an act that is the effect of, or 'caused' by, a first act and is distinguished from *processio operationis* that is applied to acts as perfection of potency such as the act of understanding (*intelligere*).  *Intelligere* 'causes' *dicere* because, once something is understood, its expression naturally follows.   *Processio operati* offers the possibility of analogous understanding of processions in God.

Whereas in human understanding there are distinct acts of understanding and judging, God is one pure infinite act of understanding love.  A divine *dicere* must be conceived as part of the one act that is God necessitating identity between principle and term of the procession.  This does not render the notion of procession meaningless because: "It is not necessary that what proceeds interiorly in an intelligible procession be different; on the contrary, the more perfectly it proceeds, the more it will be one with that from which it proceeds."[165]

In God, therefore, perfect intellectual reflection means that principle and term are identical without elimination of the reflection.  Lonergan cites Aquinas as repeatedly affirming that the procession of the Word in God is "according to an intelligible emanation", or "by an

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[163] *Verbum,* 205. The distinction is that of a 'principle of movement or change in another or in self as other', and a 'principle of movement in that in which the motion occurs first and per se and not by accident.'  See the discussion in sub-sections 2.8.4 *potentia activa* (pp77-79) and 2.8.8 'nature and efficiency'' (pp 84-86) above.
[164] See sub-section 2.8.1 pp72-73 above.
[165] *Verbum,* 206, n66. The citation is from *Summa theologiae,* I, q.27, a.1, ad 2m.

intelligible procession" or "a word proceeding intelligibly".[166]   Inner words proceed from

intelligence in act as previously explained in discussion of *emanatio intelligibilis.*[167]   It

follows that "the inner word of defining not only is *caused by* but also is *because of* the act

of understanding.  In the former aspect the procession is *processio operati.*  In the latter

aspect the procession is *processio intelligibilis.*" [168]   Similarly, the procession of judgment

is a *processio operati* and a *processio intelligibilis* because reflective understanding is an

intellectual grasp of sufficient evidence as being sufficient.

In God, therefore, the inner word has to be understood as proceeding from an infinite act of

understanding by a pure *processio intelligibilis.*  It is not *processio operati* because the two

entities are not entirely distinct in the manner of *intelligere* and *dicere* in the human

intellect.  As an intelligible procession is a purely mental concept it invites the question as

to its reality as procession.  Lonergan agrees that intelligible procession cannot be a reality

except in a mind and comments that the question is that of the reality of mind.[169]  Any prior

assumption about the impossibility of immaterial reality clearly rules out not only 'mind'

(and, theologically, 'soul') but also God and 'spirit'.

Aquinas also indicates how the procession of the Word in God can be understood as a

natural generation.[170]  While in the human intellect thoughts are not reality but only intend

what is defined or affirmed, in God intellect is substance and the act of understanding is the

act of existence.  God is also 'being itself' (*ipsum esse*) continually grasped by *ipsum*

*intelligere* in a complete identity that is also perfectly expressed in one Word.  That divine

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[166] *Verbum,* 206-207, nn69-74. The citations are from *Summa theoloigae,* I, 27, aa1-3.
[167] See sub-section 2.4.3. pp54-57, above.
[168] *Verbum,* 207.
[169] " 'Mental' is opposed to 'real' only inasmuch as one prescinds from the reality of mind." *Verbum,* 208.
[170] *Verbum,* 208, n76. The reference in Aquinas is to *Summa theologiae,* I, q27, a.2.

Word is thought, definition, judgment and yet has the same nature as God whose substance is intellect. The divine Word, therefore, is also *ipsum esse*. The infinite *est* is identical with infinite *esse* but there is an intelligible procession because the divine Word *is* because of divine understanding as uttering. The use of language such as "begotten" is appropriate, therefore, in that it conveys natural generation in the procession of the Word.

## 2.11.5 The Second Procession

Understanding the relation of will to intellect in Aquinas is necessary for his analogical understanding of the second procession.

Will as 'rational appetite' is distinguished from natural appetite, referring to general natural inclinations or tendencies, and sensitive appetite, referring to natural spontaneous sense awareness. Rational appetite refers to the desire for whatever is understood and affirmed to be good by the intellect. Desiring is the operation of the will. Anything that has understanding, therefore, has a will. Understanding takes in and is concerned with truth in the mind, but willing tends outwards towards the delight or love of experiencing the good judged to exist.[171]

The understanding that there is an intelligible procession of love in the will from the word produced in the intellect, results in Lonergan's affirmation about its analogical application to the second procession in God.

> As complete understanding not only grasps essence and, in essence, all properties, but also affirms existence and value, so also from understanding's self-expression in judgment of value, there is an intelligible procession of love in the will.[172]

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[171] Aquinas discusses the appetites, including the will, in *Summa theologiae*, I, q.78 aa 1-2; q. 80, aa 1-2; q. 81, aa2-3; q.82, aa 1-5.
[172] *Verbum,* 209.

For human beings, this means that sin is not an act in the will but a failure to act; a failure either to do the good or to refuse to do the wrong. Sin and evil, therefore, are to be understood as a privation of the good. Sinners have the alternatives of repentance or rationalisation to relieve inner disquiet that discordance between knowing and doing effects.

Lonergan refers to the question "How are the things said about the Holy Spirit to be understood?" in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* to address the question of its analogous application to God.[173] Aquinas argues that the basic act of will is love and explains the difference between the presence of the beloved in the intellect and in the will. In the intellect the presence is that of the form or species while in the will the presence is dynamic in the desire for the beloved. The presence of the beloved in the will of the lover is thus explained by final causality. The term of the desire is the beloved and by final causality there results from the beloved the *amari* (to be loved) of the beloved, but the *amari* of the beloved is not in the beloved but in the lover. Love, therefore, transforms the lover into the beloved in so far as the lover is moved by love toward the beloved. This means that the beloved is in the lover in so far as the beloved is actually loved and that the presence of the beloved in the lover is exactly the same entity as the act of love in the lover.[174] The argument demonstrates that the procession of Love is not a generation such as the procession of the Word. The object of will is not in the will by reproduction but as the desired goal is to the tendency towards it.

The application of this argument to the procession of the Holy Spirit proceeds as follows:

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[173] *Verbum,* 209. The reference in *Contra Gentiles* is to Book 4, c.19.
[174] *Verbum,* 210.

1. Since God understands, God must have a will.  In God, will cannot be distinct from intellect and substance.

2. Since God is pure act, the will of God must be in act.  Since the basic act of will is love, it must be actually loving.

3. The proper object of God's love is the goodness of God that is identical with God. Love is a dynamic presence, therefore, the love of God involves a dynamic presence of God in God.

4. There cannot be a dynamic presence of the beloved in the lover's will unless there is first an intellectual conception.  It is not the concept but the conceived that is loved and, therefore, divine love is related to the Word and to God the Father from whom the Word proceeds.[175]

An understanding of 'real' or distinct relations in God indicating three 'persons' is straightforward once the *processio intelligibilis* of the inner word from the act of understanding is understood.  The importance of correctly understanding the procession of the inner word in understanding Aquinas on the Trinitarian processions is demonstrated.

### 2.11.6 Ordered Trinitarian Theology

The order that Aquinas follows in his Treatise on the Trinity has a twofold structure. Initially Aquinas discusses processions in God (q.27), followed by relations (q.28), and persons (q.29).  That order is reversed as Aquinas deals with the persons as persons (qq.30-32); the persons are considered individually (qq.33-38); the persons are compared to the

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[175] *Verbum,* 210-211.

divine essence (q.39), to the divine relations (q.40), to notional acts (q.41) and to one another (qq.42-43).[176]

Earlier in *Verbum,* Lonergan had described two possible orders in which science may be studied. The synthetic approach begins from principles and proceeds deductively to conclusions, while the analytic approach begins with objects and by inquiry and analysis proceeds to establish principles. The former is the order of teaching or exposition and the latter is the order of discovery. Lonergan makes the point that, "Both of these lines of approach are mere abstractions, for actual thinking oscillates dialectically between the two methods."[177] Both approaches are utilized in the Treatise on the Trinity. Firstly (qq.27-29), the argument follows the order of teaching beginning with principles accepted as true expressions of Christian belief. Questions about the notion of processions in God must then precede discussion of relations between processions and questions about relations precede those about persons. Secondly (qq.30-43), the order of discovery is followed. The starting point is persons as persons and the argument proceeds to relations and notional acts, which are the same reality as the processions.

Lonergan assesses the twofold order of Aquinas as "in a class by itself".[178] He illustrates by indicating that it provides a "really satisfying" solution to the perennially disputed question of how the Father is to be understood as eternally Father. If the Father is understood as Father by relation, a procession is supposed that requires a generation that precedes that of becoming Father. It is the ordered approach that allows the distinction between the property of Father as relation, subsequent to generation, from the same

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[176] *Verbum,* 214.
[177] *Verbum,* 74.
[178] *Verbum,* 213.

property as constitutive and prior to generation. The question of how the same property can be both prior and subsequent is a question that "is not about the property itself but about the systematic order of our concepts."[179] Aquinas never lost sight of the fact that he is dealing with analogical reasoning and that reasoning is followed through systematically.

Theologically, the twofold order allowed the Augustinian psychological analogy to be employed in the same manner that, philosophically, naturally known pure perfections are used in coming to the understanding God as *actus purus et perfectus*. The point is summarised by Lonergan as follows:

> .. natural reason cannot establish that there are in God *processio intelligibiles*, that the divine Word is because of divine understanding as uttering, that divine love as proceeding is because of divine goodness and understanding and Word as spirating. Such further analogical knowledge of *quid sit Deus* pertains to the limited but fruitful understanding that can be attained when reason operates in the light of faith. Thus, the Augustinian psychological analogy makes trinitarian theology a prolongation of natural theology, a deeper insight into what God is.[180]

Through the twofold order "the measure of significance to be attached to the *imago Dei*" is also revealed.[181] Two modes or stages of thought are reflected in the orders of teaching and discovery. The psychological analogy is dominant as long as we are in the process of seeking understanding and concepts are in the process of development. It enables arguments to be made and assessed. Once the concepts become expressions of what has been understood, the analogy is transcended and there is some limited and inadequate understanding of the presence of mystery.

In Lonergan's assessment, Aquinas never allows the psychological analogy to take the place of the divine essence as the one sufficient principle of explanation. "[It] is just the

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[179] *Verbum,* 214.
[180] *Verbum,* 215.
[181] *Verbum,* 215.

side door through which we enter for an imperfect look."[182]    Aquinas himself regarded his

work as an hypothesis that did not exclude the possibility of other understandings.[183]

Theology was not a matter of providing certainty or of demonstrating the truths of faith but

of finite analogical understanding.    Certainties in theology are a matter of faith.    As

Lonergan states:

> By the light of natural reason we argue from pure perfections to the pure act.    In the
> subalternated science of theology we operate in virtue of *ipsum intelligere*, under the direction of
> divine revelation, without grasping the divine essence, yet truly understanding the relation of
> properties flowing from the essence, both from the connection between the mysteries and from
> the analogy of nature.    Thus the ideal of theology as science is the subalternated and so limited,
> analogical, and so imperfect understanding of *quid sit Deus*, which, though incomparable with
> the vision of God, far surpasses what can be grasped by the unaided light of natural reason.[184]

In Lonergan's opinion, the achievement of Aquinas is that he knew what could be reached

through the intellect and achieved it.    He also knew that, although the divine essence was

beyond our understanding in this life, an imperfect analogical understanding was possible.

Through use of the psychological analogy, he systematically proceeded to that limited goal.

> Imperfectly we grasp why God is Father, Word and Spirit, inasmuch as we conceive God, not
> simply as identity of being, understanding, thought, and love, but as that identity, and yet with
> thought because of understanding, and love because of both, where 'because' means not the
> logical relation between propositions but the real *processio intelligibilis* of an intellectual
> substance.    What is truly profound is also very simple.[185]

Lonergan acknowledges that the development of an understanding that holds together

philosophy and theology, reason and faith, was possible only because of previous

achievements.    There is a history of dogmatic development and scholarly endeavour that

preceded the work of Aquinas.    The systematic distinction, completed in the early thirteenth

century, between natural and supernatural and thus between philosophy and theology was

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[182] *Verbum,* 216.
[183] *Summa theologiae,* I, q.32, a,1, ad 2m.
[184] *Verbum,* 219.
[185] *Verbum,* 220.

necessary in that it allowed Aquinas to give due consideration to both philosophy and theology. Largely through his work theology discovered "its potentialities and its limitations as subalternated science."[186]

## 2.12 Aquinas and Today's Questions

Notwithstanding Lonergan's praise for the achievement of Aquinas in the thirteenth century, today's questions are posed in a very different world of meaning. Metaphysics is not predominant and the Aristotelian ideal of science as of the necessary and immutable has been superseded by scientific method and the intelligibility of probabilities. Contemporary philosophical approaches vary greatly but major concerns are axiological and praxeological. Rather than speculation about an ideal world, questions about authentic living in the existing situation (the 'real world') have become central.[187] This reorientation of interest has not meant a repudiation of theory but an aversion to excessive analysis of abstract essences or transcendent ideas is discernable. Awareness that any grasp of truth is situated in a particular historical and cultural context has led to recognition that definitive statements expressing a grasp of totality are no longer possible in the area of values and decisions. The post-modern suspicion of all 'meta-narratives', or unified theories of understanding, is an expression of the context in which questions arise today.

The situation has been reflected in theology and has found expression in many ways. One of its manifestations is a more discreet attitude to dogma. Dogmatic statements, no matter how universal their intended reference, are expressed in terms of a particular situation and culture. Rather than an exposition of revealed truth, theology has become a hermeneutical

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[186] *Verbum,* 221.
[187] From various expressions of existentialism, with their emphasis on human agency, and the pragmatism of Dewey, a continuing philosophic focus on empirical lived reality has greatly influenced the present situation.

discipline involving the recognition of partial and limited viewpoints, of diversity and pluralism, of ambiguity rather than certainty. This has resulted in a withdrawal of concern for, or denial of the possibility of, a unified systematic understanding such as that found in Aquinas.

In such a context, the thirteenth century achievement of Aquinas may be regarded as a matter of historical interest only, an example of a development in systematic theology intended to reach the theoretical level of the time. But if Lonergan's reading is correct, it is in understanding Aquinas as the efficient cause of his theology that the key to his achievement is to be found. That Aquinas took account of his own knowing and its relation to willing is discovered to be fundamental to understanding processions in the Holy Trinity. If Aquinas is correct the source of knowing and loving is known to be in us as the gift of God in creation, and so is 'natural'. The gift, through revelation and faith, of knowing and loving of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit unites with and extends natural knowing and loving. The fact that understanding, knowing and loving actually takes place in a human being is the common factor capable of providing a basis beyond all the distinctions of history and culture.

Propositions, principles, practices and institutions have necessarily arisen because human experience of the love of God has a history, and occurs in different social and historical contexts yielding varieties of forms of expression. They are a gift from the past to the present or from other cultures to our own. There have been momentous periods of change during which it was far from clear what constituted authentic development. It was decades before the work of Aquinas was recognised as a major development. As the good is always concrete and ideas about the good are never a substitute, so the reality to which Aquinas

and others bear witness and seek to understand is not discovered in their ideas or formulations, however persuasive they may seem. For Aquinas, openness to truth is grounded in faith. It is possible to know about the world because God is Creator of all that is and made us so that we might understand that which is other than ourselves and expand our being. In relation to Christian faith, it is the reality of relation to God in the life of a human subject that is primary, rather than the acceptance of ideas or formulations as giving correct expression to the objectification of the content of faith. Formulations of belief are important and have their necessary place but the reality of religiously converted subjects is that which predisposes their understanding and acceptance.

The following chapter will consider the conceptualist standpoint on the matters raised in this chapter and the effect of alternative readings of Augustine and Aquinas. The effect of the neglect or systematic exclusion of the human subject on understanding and theology will be examined.

The further development of Lonergan's thought, following his work on *Verbum,* and its application to theological method will be outlined in the fourth chapter.

# Chapter Three

# Conceptualist Approaches to Theology

## 3.1 Introduction

Since concepts and definitions are the verbal expression of understandings and knowledge, their importance consists in enabling the communication and transmission of knowledge. A definition is an expression, in general terms, of that which is essential to having the insight necessary to grasp the understanding contained in it.[1]

Since words represent concepts, and sentences propositions, it may seem apparent that concepts are grasped first and are prior to understanding, their meaning being established through reasoning that relates them in a larger verbal context to form propositions. Words, however, are meaningless if they are received without understanding, as any encounter with a language not understood makes clear. From an intellectualist standpoint, the critical prerequisite is intelligence in act as the grasp of understanding. Presented with a new idea or language, insight is required to provide new understanding that supplements or corrects previous understandings, thus enabling an increase in knowledge.

This chapter will explore the importance of the distinction between conceptualist and intellectualist approaches for theology. After discussing the origin of the distinction between the approaches, examples will be given of the effect of conceptualist approaches to Augustine and Aquinas, particularly in regard to the issues addressed by Lonergan in *Verbum* and considered in the previous chapter.

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[1] See Lonergan, *Insight*. pp31-37 for a discussion of the genesis of a definition using the example of the definition of a circle.

## *3.2 Conceptualist and Intellectualist Views Contrasted*

### 3.2.1 The origin of their opposition

The opposition between intellectualist and conceptualist views is based on conflicting views of knowing, which result in contrary views of the operation of the intellect.[2] Disagreement centres on whether knowing occurs through confrontation or by identity. In Western culture its origins can thus be related to a basic difference between Plato and Aristotle.

For Plato, knowledge, as demonstrated by mathematics and moral ideals, must be of the immutable. Because the material world, as perceived through the senses, is in a state of continuous change, it cannot be the source of knowledge. Sense perception attains mere appearance, which varies over time and with different observers, and is to be distinguished from knowledge that is characterized by stability and permanence. The source of knowledge has to be non-sensory and immaterial, a universal and unchanging realm of Ideas or 'Forms'.[3] A standpoint positing two realms, one transient and material and the other immaterial and unchanging, results in a fundamental duality of the knowing subject and known object. Arriving at knowledge is a matter of encounter or confrontation because it involves movement that somehow connects the distinct realms of knower and known.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Aristotle's position was that form is not a separate reality but is to be understood as an intelligible cause that, joined with matter, constitutes a 'thing'.[4] Coming to know some'thing' is through the identity in act of the intellect with the

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[2] *Verbum*, 192-196

[3] In the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus,* Plato presents the argument that the experience of learning is actually a recollection of knowledge of forms from the previous existence of the soul.

[4] See 2.10.2, p90ff.

intelligible. This is the position consistently held by Aquinas.[5] Just as there is identity in act between seeing and an object seen that is a perfection of the potency of sight, there is identity in act when the intellect understands the intelligible. Acts of understanding, therefore, are primary in the process of coming to know. In Lonergan's understanding of Aquinas, conceiving and judging are subsequent acts that objectify the content of acts of understanding. Confrontation is secondary as it occurs with conceived or affirmed objects.

## 3.2.2 Confrontation or Identity?

Theories of knowing based on the idea of the fundamental ontological duality of knower and known and as an encounter between distinct realms have had a significant and lasting influence in Western culture and Christian theology. A neo-Platonist understanding of knowing greatly influenced Augustine. Knowledge would be impossible, for Augustine, if God, the source of all light, did not illumine the mind directly through images, and thereby enable knowledge of truth through an encounter with the eternal reasons or divine Ideas.[6] Augustine had no need to consider the complexities of abstraction and formation of concepts because, for him, the question had not arisen. As explained in the previous chapter, it was a question for Aquinas, who, influenced by Aristotle, transformed direct illumination of the mind by God into an illumination of an object by a mind that is illumined by God, thus necessitating the positing of an agent intellect.

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[5] *Summa Theologiae,* I, q.14, a.2 c. See also *ST* I, q.87, a.1, ad 3m. Aristotle, *De Anima,* III, 4, 430a 3-4.
[6] A clear introduction is given in pp 77-93 of Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lima, Ohio.: Academic Renewal Press, 2003). A detailed discussion of Augustine on divine illumination may be found in Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch (London: Gollanz, 1961). pp 83-91.

There have been many different manners in which theories of knowing through encounter have been expressed but they share the basic assumption that concepts are the basic term or object of knowing and reasoning is the means by which understanding is reached. In the period following Aquinas, John Duns Scotus (c1266-1308) rejected the notion of insight into phantasm as the apprehensive abstraction of forms and argued that concepts are abstracted or known first. Thus, in Lonergan's view, he "necessarily reduced the act of understanding to seeing a nexus between concepts".[7] Kant later assumed a similar basis and thus, for Lonergan, his "critique was not of pure reason but of the human mind as conceived by Scotus".[8] A conceptualist approach to knowing is now so commonly accepted that it is usually assumed as a norm that does not require comment. Only when the subject matter requires an explanatory account is it likely to be explicitly formulated as a theoretical position. The prevalence of such a view forms a basic standpoint that Lonergan, in an earlier draft of the first two *Verbum* articles, attributed to:

> naïve realism, to the illegitimate and unconscious transference into analytic thought of what seems obvious to common sense. For common sense, knowing is identical with knowing an object, contacting an object, being in the presence of an object, being confronted with an object, standing opposite an object, being confronted by an object. Knowing is *attingentia obiecti* (attaining an object) for common sense, for Scotus, … and for not a few of my prospective readers.[9]

The basic question concerning human knowing, therefore, is the understanding of the connection between a knowing subject and a known object. Conceptualist solutions often

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[7] *Verbum,* 39, n126. Throughout the Middle Ages, perception was a contentious topic, and one in which answers to causal questions influenced positions on knowing. William of Ockham radicalised the critiques of Scotus and others by denying the idea of a *species*. He did so on the basis of his razor: if *species* is denied then an account of the phenomena can be given that uses fewer entities. *Species* were regarded as entities and Ockham's programme thus resulted in an account of perception that eliminated *species*. His conclusions were based on the prior assumption of the razor rather than on evidence.

[8] *Verbum,* 39 and n126. See also Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol 2 Part 2* (New York: Image Books ed. Doubleday and Co. Inc, 1962). 206-222.

[9] *Verbum,* 249.

involve the positing of an intuitive abstraction of concepts as universals distinct from particular matter. The formation of concepts can be held to be a matter of perception occurring as a result of confrontation with a likeness or species of particular objects being 'impressed' on the senses. A concept is spontaneously present to the intellect once a sufficient number of similar species have been so impressed. Lonergan regards Kant's position, that the species is always present to the intellect a priori, as an adaptation of the same idea. Concepts, therefore, are perceived automatically "with the same natural spontaneity as images from imagination" and the viewpoint can be described as conceptualist.[10]

The only act of the intellect in such a process is acknowledgement of the presence of a concept in the mind. No act of understanding is involved. Intelligence is active only in the process of reasoning toward conclusions. As certitude of knowledge is sought, the focus of reasoning tends to be on demonstration rather than on the subjective operations involved on the part of the knower.[11] The mind is conceived solely in functional terms. Overlooked, or dismissed, is the possibility that the mind can be known through its own operations: that one can *add to* experience of the operations of attending, inquiring, understanding, conceiving, critically reflecting, judging, evaluating and deciding, a further attending, inquiring and so forth, that may be applied to the operations themselves and thus provide a basis for knowledge of our own knowing.

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[10] *Verbum,* 224.
[11] *Verbum,* 218/219.

The conceptualist's basic assumption that knowing is through confrontation requires that the reality of objects of knowledge be 'out-there' or over-against the knower as the above citation from Lonergan indicates.[12] Knowledge of internal objects has to be of the 'in here' to be encountered by introspection. By contrast, the duality of knower and known ceases to have relevance for the intellectualist because, in the act of understanding, intellect and intelligible are identical. The distinction of knower and known is merely one among many that intelligence in act takes into consideration in acts of understanding.

In summary, there are two opposing views that posit different understandings of the operation of the intellect. Lonergan remarks that "it is not too surprising that conceptualists, who do not advert to their own acts of understanding, fail to observe such advertence in Aristotle and Aquinas."[13] As to the view that there is an unnecessary complexity in all the distinctions drawn by Lonergan in his reading of Aquinas, and of Aquinas in his development of Aristotle, Lonergan simply invites others to produce a better view that takes all the data into consideration. In his view, a conceptualist reading deviates from clear statements by Aquinas about the intelligent and conscious reception of the *species.*[14] It also fails to discern the distinction between the two schemes of analysis (termed 'Aristotelian' and 'Avicennist' by Lonergan) used by Aquinas that allowed him to maintain that there is an act that is a reception and its object is its mover.[15] This is impossible from a conceptualist standpoint because an object is always a term or endpoint.

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[12] See n9 above.
[13] *Verbum,* 195.
[14] See Chapter 2, 2.8.6 pp80ff above
[15] *Verbum,* 140-142. The meaning of '*potentia activa*' and 'object' is discussed at 2.8.4 and 2.8.7, in Chapter 2 above.

Conceptualism also gives rise to negative connotations associated with the notion of abstraction. It results in a concern with the remote and the static and with definitions, distinctions, propositions and conclusions, related through use of logic and deduction. Systems of interrelated concepts can give the illusion of permanent and universal truth if they are removed from concrete data that might indicate their limitations or call into question their conclusions. Such a deficiency may affect any system of thought where basic principles are regarded as settled and beyond questioning. In the absence of recognition of the priority of understanding as their source, laws, systems, and practical techniques develop and become regarded as foundational. Such an approach characterised scholastic theology after Aquinas, influencing those who regarded themselves as Thomists. Lonergan's intellectualist understanding of Aquinas could also be reduced to yet another theoretical framework, if it is regarded solely as a series of basic objective propositions that form a system capable of logical extension and rigorous application.

An intellectualist approach does not neglect the subject but is not lost in subjectivity. It is characterized by openness to questions, further understanding and correction through any valid technique or procedure that promotes understanding. The focus is on the creativity of intelligence as the criterion of truth and the experience of the activity of understanding. In a reflective act of understanding there is a return to the concrete and the data of sense or consciousness to address relevant questions in assessing the sufficiency of evidence to make a judgment. The withdrawal into abstraction and reasoning are for the purpose of returning to data of sense or consciousness with understanding that enriches experience. The art of theological judgment, therefore, has to take into account a return to the concrete,

the experience of the faithful in particular circumstances, the possible development of further understanding and the effects of changes in meaning over time.

In the following section, examples of conceptualist approaches to some of the basic issues regarding the understanding of Augustine and Aquinas will illustrate its determinative influence on the conclusions reached.

## 3.3. Conceptualist Approaches to Augustine and Aquinas
### 3.3.1 Phillip Cary on the Inner Self in Augustine

In his book *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self,*[16] Phillip Cary presents the results of research into the intellectual process that resulted in Augustine's understanding of an 'inner self'. His focus is on the development of the concept of a private inner self that is capable of an intellectual vision in which the soul experiences the presence of God. He prescinds from consideration of Augustine's actual experience, thus differing from Lonergan for whom Augustine is "a subject that may be studied but, most of all, must be encountered in the outpouring of his self-revelation and self-communication."[17]

Cary traces the history of philosophic influences on Augustine and analyses his use, adaptation and development of neo-Platonist sources in order to fashion understandings in harmony with Church doctrine. He finds that Augustine's intellectual development is not a movement from Platonism to mature Christianity but one in which his Platonism evolved in tandem with his understanding of orthodox Christian faith. Cary refers to a scholarly consensus that:

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[16] Cary, *Augustine's Invention.*
[17] *Verbum,* 6.

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> Augustine's engagement with Neoplatonist thought was long and deep, involving a highly personal, sometimes astonishingly original but in any case never uncritical appropriation of many of Plotinus's most difficult and interesting ideas. …. it is largely to this process that we owe the notion of the private inner self.[18]

Cary describes a developing series of complex puzzles that, after false starts and dead ends, are eventually 'solved' by devising the concept of a private inner self. Nothing quite like the idea had existed before. The inner self as conceived by Augustine is a private (privation resulting from the Fall)[19] and incorporeal 'space' in which illumination, through a movement that is both inward and upward, enables encounter of the human soul with God. Essentially, it is the privatisation within the human mind of the Platonic intellectual vision.

In describing the notion of a private inner self as an invention of Augustine and the product of highly articulate philosophical inquiry, Cary refers to the ambiguity of the term 'invention'. The Latin *inventio* originally meant finding the right word or thought for an occasion, hence finding the solution to a problem, and only later did it make the transition to creating something new.[20] Invention in the former sense leaves open the question of whether Augustine's invention was the discovery and identification of a reality about being human or the creation of a new idea or concept. In Cary's opinion, the latter is the case. As an invention, the private inner self is fiction rather than fact, a Hamlet rather than a Shakespeare. "It is an image of ourselves that a great dramatist has set on the stage of our

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[18] Cary, *Augustine's Invention*. 33.

[19] Cary, *Augustine's Invention*. 115-124. Cary explains that for Plotinus and Augustine, the Fall is not to be equated with embodiment "but over-involvement in the particularities of embodiment, which separate one soul from another, burdening us with individuality in Plotinus and inner privacy in Augustine." (p115) The privacy of the inner self is thus a temporary phenomenon and not a necessary feature of the inner self. It is a result of the ignorance and discord that divides soul from soul in our present state. Originally all souls were one in Adam and in future blessedness souls will no longer be divided from each other, the inner will not be private but open as intended by God.

[20] Cary, *Augustine's Invention*. viii.

literature and subsequently it has much to do with who we are."[21]  Rather than a means of expressing a self-discovery arising from reflection on experience, it is the formation of a concept to solve a conundrum, involving the reconciling of ideas, that has generated experiences.

Cary's assumption that Augustine was primarily engaged in a process of reconciling ideas through reasoning rather than understanding experience determines his conclusion. Augustine himself certainly thought he was seeking understanding of the reality of his experience of the love of God in Jesus Christ.  Of course, in his search for understanding, Augustine used and adapted the terminology and thought forms available to him

Omission of the concrete, of the experience to be understood, in favour of the analysis of concepts leads inevitably to the notion of private inner self as a dramatic invention or mental construct.  But if, when Augustine purports to describe his own experience, we take him at his word, his writings will be regarded primarily as self-revelatory.  Experience becomes the starting point and Augustine is understood as engaged in self-disclosing communication.  Primarily, we are brought into communication with a person.  The conceptual framework of his self-expression is important but secondary.  In this view, Augustine's theology and spirituality are inseparably bound together and centred in experience rather than the ideas and concepts in which they are expressed.  This distinguishing feature of Augustine is central to the enduring attraction of his work.  To read Augustine is to be engaged by the passionate inquiring mind of someone who seeks to understand his own life as related to God.  His form of expression is influenced by neo-Platonism and the concepts used have a history that can be researched with all the erudition

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[21] ———, *Augustine's Invention*., ix.

and thoroughness displayed by Cary, but they express the content of his mind as he reflected on experience.

Cary allows that not everyone will be convinced by his position on the matter of invention and that different opinions are possible. His assessment that "it was an epochal innovation when Augustine classified words as a species of signs, and treated signs as external indications of the inner will of the soul", is a statement with a quite different meaning and significance for Cary than for Lonergan.[22] The crucial difference lies in the understanding of the relation of experience, understanding and the formulation of concepts. The passage in *De Trinitate* in which Augustine writes about the inner word purports to be a description of operations of which he is immediately aware in his own mind.[23] Once that experience is objectified in words and reflected upon, Augustine intends to give an account of an inner reality. The formulation of the concept of enlightenment through an inner word in the mind is something that Augustine claimed to understand about himself.

At issue is whether Augustine's conceptualisation of a private inner self is an invention in a realm of ideas or whether it corresponds to and, in a manner sufficient for that time, explains Augustine's experience of the operation of his own mind. The general acceptance and influence in Western culture of the concept of a private inner self, such that it is almost impossible for us to imagine ourselves without it, may be regarded as testimony to its adequacy as an expression of the reality of a dimension of human experience. It could then be regarded as a development in human understanding that is open to the possibility of further understanding and development. There are societies where identity is primarily

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[22] Cary, *Augustine's Invention*. 4.
[23] Augustine, *De Trinitate,*XV, xii, 22.

communal rather than individual and the notion of a private inner self is undeveloped and it can be argued that, strictly, the concept is unnecessary. But societies where the tribe or clan is primary are also usually also undeveloped in the western tradition of theoretical thought. Once individual differentiation has been made and affirmed, it can only be corrected or added to by further understanding. It cannot be simply deleted.

Cary indicates that his intention in the work is to offer "a serious warning for Christians who are attracted to the inward turn".[24] By 'inward turn' he means looking into oneself to discover the presence of God within the soul. He considers that the concept of a private inner self generates the idea of the possibility of such an experience. For him such a possibility is contrary to the basic Christian understanding that salvation is in and through that which is other – specifically, through Jesus Christ.

> I am making a point of being critical of the concept, because the experiences worry me: I do not think that "inward" is the right direction to look to find what is other than the self. The very metaphor is incoherent, what eyeball can turn to look inside itself? Yet worse than incoherent, it is ugly; for what eye does not love to look outside itself? What lover desires to find her beloved by looking in her self? Though the thing cannot be done, the desire to do it is possible, maybe even common. I think that we would do better to desire what is outside ourselves.[25]

By using the image of looking in an outward direction to describe coming to know and love the other, Cary emphasises that a loving relation is always love of another. He indicates no interest whatsoever in the state of being-in-love of the lover. A loving relation, however, requires an attentiveness that is aware of and oriented towards the other while, at the same time, being self-aware.[26] The passage cited above is indicative of a failure to understand

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[24] Cary, *Augustine's Invention*. xi.
[25] Cary, *Augustine's Invention*. 142.
[26] For example, in referring to the fact that Dante was moved to write *The Divine Comedy* by the experience of loving Beatrice, Hefling comments that "in and through another person, Beatrice, he met what every person ought to be, and became a different person himself." He also cites Charles Williams, "Dante has to become the thing he has seen in Beatrice, and has, for that moment, seen in himself". Charles Hefling, *Why Doctrines?* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1984). 15.

the means by which a lover is aware of the self-transforming effect of their own loving even as they are totally aware and focussed on their beloved. Such an awareness is not reached by introspection, or an inward look, as Cary assumes. The beloved is in the lover in so far as the beloved is actually loved and the presence of the beloved in the lover is the same entity as the act of love in the lover. A loving relation is never simply a matter of focussing on the other as a beloved object.

Cary's position in regard to love and loving is paralleled in a conceptualist understanding of the operation of the intellect. Knowing is of the other and involves confrontation through a serious 'looking at', or consideration of, the other. Concepts are primary in the process of understanding and the enquirer's experience of the process is of little or no interest, as is evident in Cary's approach to the question of inner self in Augustine. Insufficient attention is paid to subjective elements in the process of coming to objective knowledge, or loving relation, and there is no interest in raising the question of the relation of subjective and objective in a larger context.

Cary, of course, is well aware that Augustine did not hold the notion of a private inner self in isolation from the recognition of the necessity for external means of God's grace in Jesus Christ, the gift of the Spirit, the scriptures, sacraments and Church doctrine. It is when the view of an inner self is detached from revelation and faith and the life of the Church that Cary finds its influence negative. Cary's own detachment of the concept of an inner self from experience, so that it becomes solely an idea, results from concern that the inward turn may be regarded as an alternative means of salvation. He is very suspicious that the possibility of an immediate mystical union of the self with the divine renders the

Incarnation unnecessary and the person of Jesus Christ becomes merely an example or model.  He is not alone in that concern and suspicion as will be indicated in the example that follows.  But one can be aware of the dangers of subjectivism to which Cary refers without accepting his argument that concentration should be directed solely to the objective, the 'other'.

### 3.3.2 David Cairns on the Image of God in Augustine and Aquinas

In *The Image of God in Man*, David Cairns, a professor of theology at Aberdeen from 1948-1972, influenced generations of students for ministry in Protestant churches. The book was in print for four decades from its first publication in 1953.[27]  The work traces the history of the understanding of the image of God in human beings from its biblical sources to the twentieth century.

In discussing Augustine's *De Trinitate*, Cairns comments on the steps by which Augustine reached the conclusion that the image of God must be an image of the mind as the capacity for remembering, understanding and loving God.  He finds Augustine's final step "an illogical change of ground" from the prior position of the mind's memory, understanding and love of itself.[28]  The only way that the argument can be justified is if memory, understanding and love are capacities for knowledge and love of God.  Such a view alarms Cairns because it implies that, through introspection and self-love, one can come to knowledge and love of God thus providing an alternative way of salvation to that provided through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.  Cairns acknowledges that Augustine himself did not consider such an alternative but is concerned that beginning from

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[27] David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (London: Collins Fontana Library, first publ SCM Press 1953, 1973).
[28] Cairns, *Image of God*. 103

the self to arrive at an understanding of the image of God is a potentially disastrous error. He sees the dominance of Greek thought as the reason for its wide acceptance in the Church over many centuries and Augustine's argument as containing an "undigested relic of Neo-Platonism".[29]

Cairns suggests that the essence of being human should be understood as being in responsible existence before God rather than as rationality.[30]  He regards intellectualistic interpretations of the image of God in the human as deficient because they lead inevitably to the notion of faith as an object of knowledge and as assent to a body of supernaturally revealed truth.  He sees faith as primarily an act of trust or believing response in gratitude and obedience to the gift of salvation or healing received in conversion through the love of God in Christ.[31]  He has no discernible interest in the question of the relation of intellect and the rational to the responsible and relational.

In his discussion of the image of God in Aquinas, therefore, Cairns regards the understanding that God's grace operates through natural knowing and loving, the intellect and senses, as "a most extraordinary puny basis on which to found the whole knowledge and certainty of faith and the witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers to the word of God and his grace".[32]  His Reformed theological position that reason has been corrupted in fallen human nature informs the background of suspicion motivating the comment.  An observation that it is "strange" that "the intellectual element is so prominent"

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[29] ———, *Image of God*. 105.
[30] ———, *Image of God*. 106.
[31] ———, *Image of God*. 119.
[32] ———, *Image of God*. 124. He refers to *Summa Theologiae* I, qq12 and 13.

in Aquinas' consideration of the image of God is also consistent with such a basic position.[33]

The argument that Aquinas makes that angels and human beings naturally love God more than themselves is regarded as an adoption of Aristotelian thought with insufficient modification.  If it is true of human beings, the need for salvation through the cross of Christ is brought into question.  His emphatic comment is, "There must be something far wrong here!"[34]

In response to such concern, it has to be recalled that Aquinas (as Augustine before him) was very clear that human beings are dependent on revelation for knowledge of the love of God, while still maintaining that God's grace operates with transforming effect through natural knowing and loving.  The image of God, therefore, can be understood as reflected in the human capacities for knowing and loving.  Further, Aquinas argues that since everything created by God is good, nothing can be bad by nature or have a natural inclination to evil by nature.[35]  Evil is understood as arising from a discord between the higher order of what is intended for created human nature and actual human decisions and acts in which reason becomes rationalization and desire is directed selfishly rather than by the wisdom of God.  The fact that all people are born into, and participate in, such a world operating out of kilter with its intended nature does not invalidate the point made by Aquinas.  Human development takes place in a broken sinful world in which being sinned against is experienced long before the capacities for reason and moral responsibility.  Being

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[33] Cairns, *Image of God*. 125.
[34] ———, *Image of God*. 123. Referring to *ST* I, q60, art5. The exclamation mark is telling as the only one in a dryly analytical text.
[35] *ST* I, q63, art4.

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sinned against results in an inner brokenness of spirit that, in turn, leads to active contributions to the brokenness of the world. This is not a matter of determinism, for then there would be no responsibility, but of statistical inevitability.

The miracle of God's grace, as understood by Aquinas and Augustine, is that it operates through our created capacities for knowing truth and responsible and loving decisions and action. It brings salvation that opens new possibilities of a process of healing to our brokenness. God's grace prompts from without and is received within as our response toward that which ought to be, and now can begin to be, in us. As a state of being in love with God, it is gift that evokes response, in which is recognised our true self as being in relation to the love of God.[36] It may be understood in terms of experience, on the human level, of movement analogically akin to the second procession in the Trinity, the 'spiration' of the Spirit becoming inspiration in and of the human. Such is the dynamic of conversion that recognizes the self-giving boundless love of God in Jesus Christ as the hope of the world.

The concern that Cairns raises about an alternative way of salvation is addressed by such an understanding. His suspicion about the dangers of the psychological approach of Augustine and Aquinas to understanding the image of God is based on a line of reasoning that does not hold. Consideration of the human subject need not be understood as in opposition to recognising absolute dependence on the self-revelation of God through Word and Spirit. Augustine and Aquinas undertook such reflection for the purpose of gaining analogical understanding of that which is believed through faith. That the possibility exists

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[36] The notion as understood in Aquinas is discussed above in chapter 2, section 2.8.8 Nature and Efficiency.

of such an approach being misunderstood in the manner that Cairns exhibites is not an argument that makes it invalid.

### 3.3.3 Paul Tillich on Augustine and Aquinas

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was a Lutheran theologian who was convinced of the need for theology to adopt new forms of expression in order to address twentieth century concerns and questions. A constant theme in Tillich's work is the search for the absolute, the definitive and infinite, that is able to bring fulfilment, a point of rest, to the questing mind and heart thus providing a basis for the courage to be. Claiming to follow in the way of St Augustine, Tillich said, "If anyone wishes to place a label on me, he can call me an 'Augustinian'."[37]  He claimed the self-designation because, in his own words, "I am in basic agreement with Augustine with respect to the philosophy of religion."[38]  He regarded philosophy of religion as responding to the question of the relation of religious and philosophical expressions of the absolute in terms of both being and knowing.[39]

Tillich refers to the ontological and cosmological arguments as the traditional contrasting philosophical approaches to the relation of the two forms of expression of the absolute. He considers Augustine as giving classic expression to the ontological solution to the problem. Fundamental to Augustine's position is the standpoint of interiority. His description of an immediate awareness that truth received in the mind or soul also transcends it leads to the identity of truth with being as the ground of the self. The ultimate of infinite Being-itself is

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[37] Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972). 111.
[38] Tillich, *History of Christian Thought*. 111.
[39] Tillich's discussion is found in Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959). 10-29.

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equated with the Truth-itself (and with the Good-itself) on the basis of an immediate awareness of their identity in the human mind or soul. It is an awareness of the transcendent realm of essence, of the source and goal of existence, that cognition cannot penetrate but in which the desires of the heart are fulfilled. An 'immediate awareness' is thus the basis for apprehending an ultimate order (of 'essence') that is prior to the finite experience of the order of reason (on the level of 'existence'). Tillich formulates his Augustinian ontological principle of the philosophy of religion as follows: "Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the *prius* of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically."[40]

The "something unconditional" is the source and ground of being. In the classical Greek tradition it is the *Logos,* the principle of structure present in both the order of reality and the human mind. In traditional Christian religious terms, it is awareness of the presence of God that is, at the same time, the most profound self-awareness. It also carries the note of the good, for it is desire for the good that motivates human subjects under the conditions of existence to realise their essence. In Tillich's own preferred terminology, the presence of God to the mind is awareness of the absolute or unconditioned as our 'ultimate concern'.

Such Augustinian 'awareness' of union with God in the soul is to be understood as a union of subject with subject and not the relation of a human subject to God as object. If God is brought into the subject-object structure, the great danger is that God becomes a being among other beings, even the highest being, but ceases to be the real God.[41] He concludes

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[40] Tillich, *Theol of Culture*. 22.
[41] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Vol 1; Reason and Revelation, Being and God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952). 172-173.

"God can never be reached if he is the *object* of a question, and not its *basis*."[42]  God is Being-itself that precedes the cognitive division between subject and object and is equated with the Truth-itself that is presupposed in every question, and the Good-itself presupposed in our desiring or loving.  God is the presupposition of the question of God and also, implicitly, of every search for truth, reality and fulfilment.

It will be noted that Tillich uses the term 'awareness' as a neutral term that avoids what, for him, are the misleading connotations of other possible terms.  'Knowing' is inadvisable because it "presupposes the separation of subject and object and implies an isolated theoretical act, which is just the opposite of awareness of the Unconditioned."[43]  Such awareness, according to his 'Augustinian' approach, is an ecstatic fulfilment of the question or quest for the ultimate in which human reason is elevated beyond its subject-object structure to a reunion of existence with essence.  Its immediacy in the receiving subject has the character of the self-evident; an immediate 'awareness' that is beyond any knowing about an object and simply 'is'.

Such a position is based on the priority of ontology over epistemology because, as Tillich believes, every epistemology contains an implicit ontology.  "Since knowing is an act which participates in being or, more precisely, in an "ontic relation", every analysis of the act of knowing must refer to an interpretation of being."[44]  The basis of the prior ontological structure central to Tillich's theology is the fundamental polarity of self and world or subject and object.  It is a given implicit in the asking and answering of any question.

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[42] Tillich, *Theol of Culture*. 13.
[43] Tillich, *Theol of Culture*. 23.
[44] ———, *Syst Theol 1*. 19.

Tillich understands the cosmological approach, associated with Aquinas, as based on the assertion that all human knowing is limited to all that may be perceived by the senses and thus God may not be known directly.[45]  Beginning with what may be naturally known of the external world and with the aid of principles, such as causality, identity and 'sufficient reason', Aquinas is understood as proceeding conjecturally and inferentially to a necessary First Cause or Supreme Being as transcendent to, and source of, the reality of the world as experienced.  The approach is characterised by Tillich as:

> the way of meeting a stranger. … The meeting is accidental.  Essentially they do not belong to each other.  They may become friends on a tentative and conjectural basis.  But there is no certainty about the stranger man has met.  He may disappear, and only probable statements can be made about his nature.[46]

Tillich understands Aquinas as believing that the reality of God is less certain and intimate to the human subject than the external world and the natural light of human reason.  The question of God arises only after the autonomous self-constitution of the human subject as perceiving and reasoning and does not involve the whole person but only the questioning intellect.  He concludes that the influence of Aristotelian rationality resulted in the intellect being regarded as predominant and "man is man *qua* intellect."[47]  Reasoning, thus understood, can only reach a point of intellectual assent to the proposition of the reality of God.  Any further and more engaging expression of the reality of God can only be found through the content of revelation that must be accepted on authority because the human mind can only operate on sense data.  To accept authority without sufficient reason is to succumb to heteronomy that stifles the authentic operation of autonomous reason.

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[45] Tillich's description of the cosmological approach is found in *Theol of Culture*. 16-19, 26-27.
[46] ———, *Theol of Culture*. 10.
[47] ———, *History of Christian Thought*. 142. Tillich here also indicates that for the Augustinian line (reaching down to Duns Scotus) the will is predominant. God is understood firstly as will, then as intellect and, similarly, the will is regarded as the centre of human personality.

Such an approach also fails, according to Tillich, if it only succeeds in identifying, as the final term of a process of analysis, the necessity for a particular being (even the 'highest' being) to exist along with (or 'above') other beings. This is the perennial danger of God being brought into the subject-object structure of human knowing. Firstly, God is not, and cannot be, 'a being' because God is 'Being itself'. Use of the term 'existence', therefore, in relation to God is inappropriate because God does not 'exist', God simply 'is'.[48] Secondly, to reach such a final term is to fail to reach that which is capable of being of ultimate concern or the source of ultimate salvation. The Unconditioned can only become a matter of ultimate concern if it appears in a concrete embodiment whereas the product of the cosmological approach is "an argumentative rationality" beside which stands "non-rational authority".[49]

Tillich regards denial of the possibility of immediate awareness of God in the experience of being grasped by ultimate concern, and the separation of faith as subjection to external authority from knowledge acquired through science, as "the roots of the deteriorization of the term "faith" by which it is understood as belief with a low degree of evidence".[50] In Tillich's understanding, what Augustine had held together was torn apart leading to a situation where for Aquinas and his followers:

> The intellect is moved by the will to accept contents which are accidental to the intellect; without the command of the will, assent to the transcendent science cannot be reached. The will fills the gap which the intellect cannot bridge, after the ontological immediacy has been taken away.[51]

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[48] For Tillich, "the question of the existence of God can neither be asked nor answered. If asked, it is a question about that which by its very nature is above existence, and therefore the answer – whether negative or affirmative – implicitly denies the nature of God. It is as atheistic to affirm the existence of God as it is to deny it. God is being itself, not a being." *Syst Theol 1*. 237.

[49] ———, *Theol of Culture*. 16.

[50] ———, *Theol of Culture*. 18.

[51] Tillich, *Theol of Culture*. 18.

The preceding paragraphs, the conclusion of which is succinctly stated in above quotation, indicate that Tillich's understanding of Aquinas is diametrically opposed to that of Lonergan. The primary cause for such fundamentally different readings is the Thomism that misunderstood Aquinas in the vital area of the relation of understanding and concepts.[52] The traditional scholastic approach to theology could be characterised as a union of intellectualist vision and submission of the will to authority and Tillich's Lutheran formation and education for ordination to ministry would inevitably result in scholasticism being regarded as intellectually decadent rational speculation.

The traditional approach to Aquinas, whether Protestant or Catholic, was ahistorical and influenced by the understanding or emphases of near contemporaries, such as Duns Scotus, and later commentators. It assumed that early commentators, such as John of St Thomas, represented precisely the same line of thought as Aquinas himself. Such conceptualist readings of Aquinas led Tillich to the conclusion that "Aquinas cuts off the immediate presence of God in the act of knowing".[53] Tillich's insistence that God is to be understood as first rather than last in our knowing, that God cannot be the conclusion from other premises but only prior to all conclusions as making them possible, is the basis of his opposition to any apparently contradictory approach. His emphasis on the *a posteriori* arguments of 'Thomism' and his exclusion, presumably through ignorance, of pre-conceptual understanding as essential to understanding Aquinas, led him to the conclusion that the will is employed to bridge the inevitable gap caused when God is not prior to, and the basis of, our knowing. While such a criticism may be directed to some schools of

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[52] A summary of various interpretations of Aquinas available to the young Lonergan, and representative of nineteenth and early twentieth century Thomism, of which Tillich was aware, is given in Liddy, *Transforming Light*. 9-12.

[53] Tillich, *History of Christian Thought*. 185.

Thomism, Lonergan has demonstrated that it is erroneous to ascribe such views to Aquinas himself. The sharp distinction drawn by Tillich between Augustine and Aquinas is simply incorrect.

For Lonergan, as described in the previous chapter, understanding Aquinas demanded an historical approach that demonstrates that Aquinas is far more 'Augustinian' than Tillich was able to appreciate. Aquinas was, in fact, "fitting an original Augustinian creation into an Aristotelian framework".[54] That 'fitting' was not at the expense of the fundamental Augustinian insight of an *a priori* element in the process of knowing that is directly related to God. The references that Aquinas makes to the "light of agent intellect" and "participation in uncreated light" would have been understood, in the thirteenth century, as referring to the traditional Augustinian position that knowing is possible because God is present to the mind *a priori*, in its structure. As this was generally accepted at the time, it was not necessary for Aquinas to labour the point.

Aquinas understood agent intellect as objectifying the 'to be known' by converting data of sense into imaginative representations ('*phantasmata*') and identifying the intelligibility of the data through the phantasm in a pre-conceptual act of understanding. The objectification and identification are by virtue of the presence of the light of intelligence in the created structure of the mind. Thus, access to reality, or being, is not by way of Platonicrecollection or vision of eternal Ideas or any other understanding of an immediate awareness in the soul or self. Knowing is a matter of the operation of acts of intelligence in understanding and judging. Aquinas' Aristotelian reformulation of Augustine's insight

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[54] Lonergan, *Verbum*. 3.

from an immediate apprehension of eternal Ideas to a 'a created participation in uncreated light' means that the a priori element in knowing is understood differently but remains fundamental to all acts of knowing.

Thus, while not providing immediate knowledge of the Absolute, the presence of intelligence in act in the created structure of the human mind is the necessary constitutive factor in all human knowing. It is possible to affirm that, for Aquinas, "every act of cognition is made in the power of divine light", a position that Tillich mistakenly claimed distinguishes the Augustinian from the cosmological approach of Aquinas.[55]

It is also incorrect to assert that Aquinas was simply arguing *a posteriori* to the conclusion of God. The ultimate reality that grounds and illuminates the mind, without which it would be impossible to know anything, is implicitly present in every act of understanding. At the same time, all that is known is a matter of intelligence operating on data of sense or consciousness.

It must be concluded that Tillich's criticism of Aquinas, for arriving at the question of God at the end of an inferential process and encountering God as a stranger, is based on an erroneous understanding of his work.

### 3.3.4 Thomas Merton on the relation of scholastic and mystical theology

In *The Ascent to Truth,* published in 1951, Thomas Merton undertook the arduous task of providing a synthesis of academic and mystical theology.[56]

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[55] Tillich, *History of Christian Thought*. 185.
[56] Thomas Merton, *The Ascent to Truth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951).

The work differs markedly in style from Merton's other writings by adopting the analytical 'voice' of the observer who, by objectification of the subject matter, is detached from it. As biographer Monica Furlong notes: "Because the book was conceived as an academic work, Merton did not feel it appropriate to speak about his own experience".[57] Merton himself describes it as an attempt "to define the nature of the contemplative experience" and, in particular, to deal with the question of "the relations of the intellect and will in contemplation."[58] It is an attempt to reconcile the 'outer word' of objective knowledge about God, as conceptualised in authoritative Church teachings, with the 'inner word' of subjective experience of mystical or contemplative relation to God, initiated by and issuing in love. Through his formation as a Cistercian of the Strict Order, Merton developed a respect for Aquinas' recognition of the intellect as integral to the soul's turning to God and, consequently, regarded mystical theology that focussed solely on love with suspicion.

Merton argues that the ways of light and darkness, of affirmation and negation, are both required in authentic Christian mystical theology. His Thomist formation is the background for his approach to objective knowledge and the works of John of the Cross inform his approach to the *via negativa*. A distinction is made between "reason" as a light and "reasoning" as a process. Reason is vital in the contemplative life while the process of reasoning can never reach God. Faith is the light of the intellect exposed to the light of the truth of God's self-revelation and contemplation is an experiential penetration into love made possible by reception of God's gift of love into the soul.[59]

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[57] Monica Furlong, *Merton: A Biography* (London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd, 1980). 197.
[58] Merton, *Ascent to Truth*. 13-14

[59] Merton, *Ascent to Truth*. 203

Merton considers the operation of human intelligence to be intuitive. "The intelligence of man is, by nature and by predisposition, intuitive. It is made to see the truth in one glance".[60] In referring to intuition Merton is obviously referring to the experience of insight but this is not understood as the experiential core of understanding that can be related to knowing and valuing as basic to the human desire for fulfilment in self-transcendence. The image of 'seeing the truth in one glance' conveys the idea that knowing reality is a matter of looking and getting an idea. His conclusion with regard to contemplation is that "it is, by its very essence, an intuition."[61] Drawing on John of St. Thomas' commentary on the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas, Merton opts for an understanding of a necessary supernatural Gift of Understanding that, through a process of purification and enlightenment, adds a capacity for contemplation of the things of God to the natural intuitive operation of the human intellect. He cites John of St Thomas as stating that:

> Transformed from power to power by the Spirit of the Lord, this Gift penetrates, by contemplation, into His glory. …. It is proper to the Gift of Understanding to raise up the heart of man and lead it to a high sense and knowledge of the things of God, penetrating and understanding that the things of God exceed every comparison. And by this lifting up of the heart, the heart itself is not exalted … but is lifted up to exalt and praise God and not its own self."[62]

Merton is impressed that John of St Thomas "spends much time in defining with the utmost theological accuracy the sense in which the inspirations of the Gift of Understanding lead us to judgment in matters of faith."[63] Judgments made through the Gift of Understanding

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[60] ———, *Ascent to Truth*. 204
[61] ———, *Ascent to Truth*. 205
[62] ———, *Ascent to Truth*. 214, citing Jean de Saint Thomas, *Les Dons du Saint-Esprit*, trad. De Raissa Maritain, Juvisy, 1930, p13, from the Commentary of John of St Thomas on *Summa Theologiae,* I, Part 2, q68.

[63] Merton, *Ascent to Truth*. 213-214

are distinctive in that they are simple and discriminative, whereas judgments arrived at by natural reason are 'analytical', being based on knowledge of causes and effects.

The Gift of Understanding, as understood by John of St Thomas, provides the basis for Merton's response to the question of the relation of the inner word of subjective mystical experience and knowledge of God to the outer word defined in Church tradition and to all that may be known naturally. For Merton, reason can and must dispose itself for the reception of the inspirations of the Spirit. The mystic is not confined to subjectivism because the Church, as the one true authoritative interpreter of divinely revealed truth, provides an objective guide for understanding subjective experience.[64] Through love, the conceptual content of revelation is penetrated to enable experiential knowledge of God. Enlightened by love, the outer word of tradition becomes the inner coming to light of the subject and such inner coming to light illuminates the tradition as meaningful. In being in love with God, the soul, moved by love, becomes the object of its own knowledge as loving and being loved but further and most importantly:

> the soul, touched and inflamed and transfigured by the illuminative flame of God's presence, becomes the actual medium in which God is known. Hence, God as He is in Himself is the object of the soul's contemplation. The medium in which He is seen is not charity considered as a habit or virtue, not the act of love reflected on by intelligence, but the soul itself burning and translucent in the flame of divine love.[65]

The activity of God and the human subject are united in the experience of the state of being in love with God, which is the presence of God to the soul.

For Merton, therefore, mystical experience is, in this life, the fulfilment of the Christian life of grace. He acknowledges John of St Thomas as seeking only the pure doctrine of

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[64] ———, *Ascent to Truth*. 259.
[65] ———, *Ascent to Truth*. 278.

Aquinas in his deliberations and, in his opinion, "There can be no question that the seventeenth-century Dominican has given us, with absolute clarity and fidelity, the true doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas".[66]

However, six years after the publication of *Ascent to Truth*, in his preface to the French translation, Merton commented that, if he were to revise the work, he would concern himself less with medieval scholastic theology and include more discussion on the psychological aspects of mysticism.[67] Two years later, in a letter to Paul Tillich, he wrote that the experience of being "subjected" to a Thomist formation had left him wary of "technical" metaphysics and that he preferred the Franciscan "instinct for immediacy".[68] These are indications of a need to move beyond the limitations of the conceptualist reading of Aquinas that had dominated his formation in theology and his appreciation of the formulations of John of St Thomas. His engagement in dialogue with mystics and contemplatives of various traditions did not require him to abandon asceticism and Thomism but formed an important part of a search for further understanding, centred in experience, from a more inclusive trans-cultural viewpoint. A concern to be scholarly and 'objective' while dealing with subjective religious experience is the tension that pervades *The Ascent to Truth*, and results in its relative dryness. A notable change of tone is evident in his engaging discussion of similar themes in later works, such as *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, where it is evident that his self-understanding of his humanity is at stake.

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[66] Merton, *Ascent to Truth*., 335.
[67] Thomas Merton, *Honorable Reader: Reflections on My Work*, ed. Robert Daggy (New York: Crossroad, 1989)., 28.
[68] Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William Shannon (New York: Farrar, straus, Giroux, 1985)., 577. This, of course, agreed with Tillich's own position.

Lonergan, in both early works on Aquinas, *Grace and Freedom* and *Verbum,* indicates that John of St. Thomas misunderstood his venerable master in ways that closely parallel the views of Duns Scotus.[69] Based on a conceptualist theory of knowing, theological reflection becomes a matter of reasoning from the outer word of tradition by re-ordering concepts, making new connections and re-formulating them as objects of knowledge. From basic premises, therefore, based on defined positions on the nature of God and of human potential and sin, reasoning deduces the necessary connections between the experience of the human subject and the Spirit's gift of understanding, Conclusions are then drawn as to how the Spirit acts to transform human capacities to the desired end of loving communion with God. An external speculative theoretical framework is provided through which the operation of the Spirit is recognised and understood. Such an approach is unable to take account of subjective conditions indicating a 'prior order' of pre-conceptual understanding as the genesis of knowledge, which Lonergan has identified as fundamental to a correct understanding of Aquinas.

Because he shared a similar notional starting point, Merton makes no comment on the apparent reduction of the mystery of God's action on the soul to a question answerable by analysis and deduction. In *Ascent to Truth,* therefore, he is restricted to calling on the teaching authority of the Church as an external guide. The dynamic connection of subjectivity and objectivity in mystical experience is understood as the transcendence of the separation of subjective and objective. An understanding of objectivity, as divorced from

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[69] Reference to John of St Thomas occurs in Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*. 72, 135n.72, 275 and in Lonergan, *Verbum*. 108n.16, 152-153n.3, 172n.109.

the subjective, restricts his approach to the question of understanding mystical relationship to God.

Later in *Zen and the Birds of Appetite,* Merton describes religious experience in terms that are similar to those of Tillich. "It is an experience of metaphysical or mystical self-transcending and also at the same time an experience of the 'Transcendent' or the 'Absolute' or 'God' not so much as object but Subject."[70] It is a lived experience of the discovery of the true self, rooted in its actual being. In comparing Buddhism and Christianity, he notes that lived experience is at the heart of Buddhism with the formulation of its teachings being regarded as secondary. An opposite tendency has prevailed in Christianity where concern with exact meanings of formulations of belief has sometimes been obsessive. "This obsession with doctrinal formulas, juridical order and ritual exactitude has often made people forget that the heart of Catholicism … is a living experience of unity in Christ which far transcends all conceptual formulations. … the taste and experience of eternal life".[71]

Such immediate experience is capable of further elucidation if the experiential realities of understanding, knowing, deciding and loving also become the subject of attention and inquiry. From the intellectualist standpoint, as identified by Lonergan in Aquinas, through self-knowledge the subject can be released from mere 'subjectivism' into the possibility of an integrative and self-aware relatedness to a universe of being. In his last years, Merton appears to have been exploring the possibility of such a basis, as an understanding of the

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[70] Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968). 71.
[71] Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. 39.

inner word that would supplement his commitment to, understanding of and gratitude for, the outer word of Catholic tradition.

## 3.4  Summary and Conclusions

From the views expressed by Cary and Cairns, it is clear that their theological standpoint begins from an assured position, a tradition, from which they are able to offer a critique of those who fail to correspond to the reasonableness of their position.  Neither has any interest in taking account of an understanding of subjective experience, which is regarded with suspicion, puzzlement and as a cause for concern.  They regard objective revealed Truth, for them expressed in classic Protestant theological positions, as determining a correct understanding of the subject from a basis that is objectively known and also provided through revelation.  Living and understanding oneself as related to God by faith requires the subject to conform to the objective understanding contained in the outer word of God as understood in the tradition.

It must be admitted that concern with subjectivity is potentially (and actually for Cary and Cairns) irresponsible and that an argument can be made that it is better to be safe and 'ordered' and only regard the objective revealed truth of the gospel as contained in the tradition.  On the other hand, reasoning from a tradition can be reduced to an instrumentality that is ready to give answers that control questioning and cast suspicion on potential stirrings of intelligence by reminders of defined acceptable boundaries of thought. It is possible that Merton became aware of this latter aberration in his listening and exploring outside his own tradition while continuing to faithfully respect it.  He certainly came to the conclusion that it was a serious mistake to consider religious experience and its

theological import to be primarily a matter for conceptual debate rather than reflection on lived experience of a reality.

Tillich, through being influenced by existentialism and committed to theological engagement with contemporary thought and culture, regarded the primary concern as being true to experience because faith is understood as a relationship. The distinction between experience and propositional truth became a separation in his adoption of the view that the attribution of absolute value to finite propositional truth is an example of idolatry. The objective content of forms of religious expression is to be understood solely as a symbolic reference to the experience of being grasped by ultimate concern. Formulations of religious belief refer to 'points' of 'awareness' of God but not to an objective content known to be true. A metaphysical approach is to be replaced by the mythological and symbolic.

A conceptualist starting point, therefore, has been shown to lead to a variety of theological end-products depending on the authenticity of the tradition and, secondarily, on the authenticity of the theologian. From the basic position that the only order in human thought is to be found in conceptual formulations reached through reason, the possibility of an intentional relation of knowing by identity that may be discovered in the subjective conditions that give rise to understanding and knowledge is neglected or overlooked.

An alternative would be an understanding that puts together revelation *and* its reception, that begins from the revelation of God *and* from the embodied, perceiving, puzzling, understanding, reasoning, desiring, deciding, acting, loving, human being. Knowledge of God through revelation is acknowledged as not primarily information about God but a

disclosure of the reality of God in relation to the human subject. As a result, only as a secondary matter can the human relation to God be objectified in statements or propositions. Theology, therefore, would regard the human relation to God not simply as objective, a concept to be regarded from a distance, but also from the objectification of the subjective operations of the subject in coming to know and to love. That would be theology from above or beyond being met by theology arising from below or within, an inner word coinciding with an outer word. Otherwise, we are left with two approaches that are easily divorced from one another. At the extremes, either one is taught an idea of God, a theoretical construct that invites mental assent at a distance and an external way to live in obedience to God, or one is invited to focus on experience with a more or less hazy sense of connection with an absolute about which little or nothing may be known and in which the question of objective truth is not important.

The question of an appropriate and authentic methodology for theology that takes account of both the outer and the inner word was the major question addressed by Lonergan in his major works *Insight* and *Method in Theology* and to his development of the thought of Aquinas we now turn.

# Chapter Four

# Lonergan on The Implications for Theological Method of the Priority of Pre-Conceptual Understanding

## *4.1 Introduction*

This chapter will outline the development of Lonergan's thought on human understanding, following his research for the *Verbum* articles, and its consequences for theological methodology. The major works to be considered are *Insight; A Study of Human Understanding* and *Method in Theology.*

Whereas the *Verbum* articles dealt with the *vetera* in the retrieval of a correct understanding of Aquinas, Lonergan addresses fundamental questions concerning the *nova* in *Insight* and *Method,* new possibilities that arise from knowledge of oneself as a knower. His concern in *Insight* was to work out the implications, for mid-twentieth century thought, of pre-conceptual understanding through insight into phantasm for such questions as the relation of understanding and knowledge, thought and reality, knowing and being, knowing and judgments of value and ethics, and further questions about what may be known or possibly known. His conclusions progressively lead to positions that provide a basis for epistemology, metaphysics, and understandings of the relation of judgments of fact and value, human freedom, the problem of evil and possible knowledge of the transcendent. As *Insight* has a trajectory from simple acts of direct understanding to possible transcendent knowledge, a scope reminiscent of Aquinas himself, only an outline of its content and structure can be given. It is a work that is basic to understanding the later *Method in Theology* in which yet further development of his understanding of the implications of the priority of understanding, or the inner word, to outer words of conceptualisation become

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evident. This chapter is intended as an outline of the development of Lonergan's position on the understanding of the intellectual pattern of experience, with particular focus on its consequences for the theologian and theological method.

The question of the influence of theological convictions on the interpretation of experience will continue to be in mind. In the chapter, on *Verbum,* the question arose in the form of whether the distinction between *intelligere* and *dicere,* as drawn by Aquinas according to Lonergan, is solely the result of reflection on experience and verifiable by anyone, or whether it results from the influence of religious belief on reflection on experience. Religious belief and theological and philosophical questioning were central in Lonergan's life, as they were, of course, for Aquinas. Beliefs coalesce into a viewpoint, or horizon, from which questions arise and possible answers are formulated and considered. It will be noted that Lonergan carefully appeals to common human experience, rather than presuppositions, in *Insight.* The positions reached are established, one step at a time. Assent is invited on the basis of evidence available, initially that of the subject's own experience of insight, with positions reached that then become the basis for consideration of further questions. He characterizes the approach as one constituted by a 'moving viewpoint'. The question of the possible role of prior convictions in reflection on experience, therefore, will remain in the background as one to which further attention will be given. The role of religious belief in the writing of *Insight* will be noted following the outline of the developing argument or 'program' that structures the work.[1]

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[1] 'Program' is the term used by Lonergan in *Insight,*11.

Before proceeding to consider the structure of the work, further introductory comments on several of its major concerns are necessary.

## *4.2 The Central Concern of* Insight.

Mathews, in his work on the authoring of *Insight,* discusses Lonergan's use of the term 'insight' to refer to acts of understanding. Identifying the first use of the phrase 'insight into phantasm' in an early draft of *Verbum,* he describes use of the term 'insight' as "hugely significant", and writes:

> It is not a word to be found in Aristotle, Aquinas, or the scholastic tradition, but it does occur frequently in the writings of Kant, in particular his *Critique of Pure Reason.* In its selection and conjunction with 'into phantasm', a use original to him, Lonergan is defining his position on understanding in opposition to both Kant and the scholastic tradition. Contra that tradition, understanding is not to be confused with intuition. For Lonergan it rises above the level of the senses and the imagination. At the same time, to hold that insights are always into something in the images or phantasms asserts that there is an interactive relation between the understanding and the imagination that can never be severed. That the content of what we imagine could be a partial cause of our understanding is contrary to Kant's view of their relation.[2]

Mathews thus locates the basic position that Lonergan develops in *Insight* in relation to major influences affecting the understanding of cognition in contemporary philosophy and theology. The crucial significance of the meaning of 'insight into phantasm' for Lonergan is also indicated in sub-title of *Insight* as "A Study of Human Understanding". This is amplified early in the Preface as follows; "the aim of the work is to convey an insight into insight ... our concern is to reach the act of organizing intelligence that brings within a single perspective the insights of mathematicians, scientists, and men of common sense."[3]

Following the argument developed in *Verbum*, he demonstrates that insights, as acts of understanding, are a much neglected but essential constitutive element of cognition.

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[2] Mathews, *Lonergan's Quest*. 135f.
[3] Lonergan, *Insight*. 4.

Insights are acts of understanding: intelligence in act. Insight into insights, therefore, is necessary to reach knowledge about the process of cognition. Understanding is a prerequisite for knowledge and is easily distinguished from mere memorisation of data. If something is not understood, it is not known, and further knowledge is possible only through further understanding.

Lonergan's concern, therefore, is with intellectual activity in a human subject in the process of coming to know. Readers of *Insight* are invited to discover, in themselves, the operations of the mind involved in their occurrence through attending to the relevant data of consciousness, and then to reflect upon them.[4] Lonergan was later to state that *Insight*'s first eight chapters "are a series of five-finger exercises inviting the reader to discover in himself and for himself just what happens when he understands".[5] The aim is to assist readers to notice, attend to, distinguish, name and identify, the *experience* of insights in order to gain an appreciation of their role in cognition and, from the basis of an understanding of understanding, move "to a basic understanding of all that can be understood."[6]

While Lonergan's aim is easily described, the actual recognition and discovery of the importance of the occurrence of insight is much more difficult. It is unusual to attend to the experience of having insights. A major reason is that, simply and unreflectively, the notion

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[4] "Though I cannot recall to each reader your own personal experiences, you can do so for yourself and thereby pluck my general phrases from the dim world of thought to set them in the pulsing flow of life ... the point here ... is appropriation; the point is to discover, to identify, to become familiar with, the activities of your own intelligence" *Insight,* 13-14.
[5] "Insight Revisited" in *A Second Collection*, 269.
[6] *Insight,* 22. The aim is then summarised as follows: "Thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only you will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments in understanding."

has been absorbed that focusing clearly on objects, rather than attending to anything subjective, is necessary for objectivity. A pervasive, deep suspicion of subjectivity, on the grounds that once entered there is no way out to objectivity, creates unease about any consideration of the data of consciousness. A further cause of the neglect of data of consciousness is the common assumption that cognition is one operation akin to sensory perception, such as seeing or hearing. This assumption hinders or prevents consideration of the possibility of the mind's operations having any relevance to understanding and knowledge.

Yet, it is undeniable that knowing takes place in the human mind. From infancy, in learning what is required to see an object and keep it in view, we learn to pay attention. Anything once learned, is stored in the memory and relied on for further advance in skills or knowledge. The desire to know is inherent in being human and provides the motive and purpose of intellectual endeavour. A pattern may be discerned: we pay attention, questions arise intending an answer, and inquiry occurs through imaginative consideration of the data ('phantasms' in Aquinas). The experience of a direct insight is of coming to an awareness of possible meaning in data, an intelligibility of a whole that is the relationship of particulars. The formulation of an insight as a definition, concept or hypothesis then becomes the object of critical reflection, intending a further insight that would enable reasonable judgment about truth and reality. Forms of reasoning, such as logical deduction or inductive generalization, are helpful tools in the process of critical reflection but it is the power of understanding, of direct and reflective insights, in response to questions that is fundamental in the process of arriving at knowledge.

Despite the fact that insights do not occur on demand, confidence in the power of understanding arises spontaneously. Entrusting ourselves to a process that may bring us to knowledge of something as yet unknown is the only way to arrive at new understanding and is known to be possible because it has been experientially confirmed in the past. Recognising the limits of our own understanding, we also learn to trust, through belief, the judgment of others. Either way, it is always an act of hope that is more akin to the dynamism of faith than of perception. The oft-drawn contrast between faith and reason is placed in a further perspective when basic cognitional structure is identified, understood and known.

### 4.3  Two Forms of Knowing

Lonergan identifies that a major difficulty of understanding our own understanding arises from the capacity of human beings for two forms of knowing. He distinguishes between full human knowing and an elementary form that is shared with animals. The latter arises simply from the apprehension of experiential data while the former is the result of understanding and critical reflection. Experience may or may not be understood. If understood, the correctness of the understanding may be questioned and, if judged to be accurate, one may be said to 'know' in the full sense.

> The elementary type is constituted completely on the level of experience; neither questions for intelligence nor questions for reflection have any part in its genesis; and as questions do not give rise to it, neither can they undo it; essentially it is unquestionable. On the other hand, in fully human knowing experience supplies no more than materials for questions; questions are essential to its genesis; through questions for intelligence it moves to accumulations of related insights which are expressed or formulated in concepts, suppositions, definitions, postulates, hypotheses, theories; through questions for reflection it attains a further component, which hitherto has been referred to as verification".[7]

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[7] *Insight,* 277.

It is the elementary form of knowing that gives rise to the commonly assumed notion that knowledge of reality is through immediate experience of what is 'out there'. Such a view is unquestionable because that which is given in experience is simply data that is prior to any questions that may arise. It is indubitable because only answers resulting from inquiry and reflection can be doubted.[8] Lonergan maintains that it is crucial to distinguish such 'knowing', as experience of the given, from full human knowing that involves coming to a judgment about insights that provide possible answers to questions arising from experience. For Lonergan, animals know the 'reality' of objects in an elementary sense but 'reality', in its proper, critical sense, is that which is the object of full human knowing. For such knowing, "the real is the verified; it is what is to be known by the knowing constituted by experience and inquiry, insight and hypothesis, reflection and verification."[9]

"The question of human knowledge" as Lonergan states in the introduction to *Insight*, "is not whether it exists but what precisely are its two diverse forms and what are the relations between them."[10]

### 4.4  A matter of Self-appropriation

Coming to a realisation of the duality of human knowing is not primarily a matter of argument, of deduction from correct premises, but the consequence of arriving at self-knowledge. The Aristotelian theorem of knowing by identity (sensible in act is the sense in act; intelligible in act is the intellect in act) that Aquinas adopts and adapts, is a theorem that Aristotle and Aquinas found convincing, presumably on the basis of reflection on experience. In the first ten chapters of *Insight*, Lonergan is likewise concerned with

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[8] *Insight,* 405-407.
[9] *Insight*, 277.
[10] *Insight,* 12.

establishing what performatively happens to be the case. He is appealing to knowledge of our own experience rather than relying on a prior theory. While his conclusions are necessarily expressed as objective statements, the reader is being invited to test their reality in themselves. Simply understanding the words and concepts used cannot suffice to understand understanding in the manner that Lonergan describes.[11]

The basic question addressed in *Insight,* therefore, is not the ontological 'What is the structure of being and human knowing?' but the personal 'What am I doing when I am knowing?' It is a first person question, an invitation to begin from the premise that I, and everyone else, have experience of coming to know. In the Introduction, Lonergan uses the terms 'program' and 'course' to describe the work. For Lonergan, knowledge of oneself as a knower begins with the discovery and identification of the operations of the mind when engaged in the intellectual pattern of experience in order to become familiar with them. This requires attention to:

> the activities of one's intelligence; the point is to be able to discriminate with ease and from personal conviction between one's purely intellectual activities and the manifold of other 'existential' concerns that invade and mix and blend with the operations of intellect to render it ambivalent and its pronouncements ambiguous.[12]

A personal appropriation of intellectual activity involves our wondering, inquiring, understanding, critically reflecting and arriving at the point of sufficient evidence for judging. Lonergan regards the operations involved as forming a natural unity that self-constitutes as a dynamic cognitional structure.[13] The self-appropriation of oneself as a

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[11] A later comment by Lonergan on the writing of *Insight*, was that its aim was "Self appropriation. Finding out in yourself and for yourself, not in a book. You get hints of what to look for, and that's it." Lambert, *Caring About Meaning*. 144.

[12] *Insight,* 14.

[13] For Lonergan's own later summary, see the paper 'Cognitional Structure' in Bernard Lonergan, *Collection*, ed. F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran, 2nd ed., vol. 4 CWL (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993)., 205-221.

knower consists in a reflective grasp and affirmation of one's intellectual operations as constituting a cognitional structure that enables knowledge of reality. It results in a capacity for a self-reflective differentiation of consciousness, or interiority, that constitutes a further realm of meaning grounding the realms of common sense and theory.

This cognitional structure is based on the study of the occurrence and role of insights in coming to know. If readers are unable to recognize in themselves what Lonergan writes about, great difficulty, if not impossibility, ensues in appreciating and following his argument. As Mathews, in his study of the background and writing of *Insight*, writes:

> We should not underestimate the difficulty of appreciating what it is like to have an insight and what they do. About this difficulty Lonergan has remarked:
>
> "You have an empirical basis, not in the sense of what is out there now, that you can put your paw on, but in the sense of something in here now that clicks inside you. But it has to click because if you haven't had the click you are not going to get anywhere with *Insight*."[14]

It is clear then that understanding, and being prepared to enter into, Lonergan's starting point is crucial because knowing our own operations in coming to know constitutes the basis of his propositions about cognition.

## 4.5 Consciousness

Since, for Lonergan, knowing our knowing occurs through reflection on operations that are accessible as data of consciousness, clarification of the meaning of the terms 'conscious' or 'consciousness' is required. This is a field of study that quickly becomes very complex and the subject of much debate.

Lonergan's simple starting point is to note that everyone is conscious when awake and loses consciousness when in dreamless sleep or a coma. When awake and alert we are

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[14] Mathews, *Lonergan's Quest*. 151. Mathews indicates the quotation from Lonergan is from a transcript of questions at the Lonergan Workshop, Boston, 19 June, 1979.

aware of sensations to which we may, or may not, pay attention. It is intentionally attending to objects and sounds that turns seeing into looking and hearing into listening. Most people rarely attend to their own consciousness as the presence of oneself to oneself. Attending to these paragraphs, for example, is to consider the question of the meaning of consciousness in the context of Lonergan's approach to knowledge of our knowing. At the same time as attending to the issue, we are also aware of the experience of that attending and of our reaction. Consciousness is, simply, the experience of our experiencing. While experience takes a multitude of different forms, consciousness is the identity immanent in our experiencing. It is the unity that enables all our experiencing to be experienced as "me" operating or being operated on. Most obviously it is through the senses that I experience in a centrally unified and integrated way but I also experience questioning, understanding, reflecting, judging, deciding and desiring. It is to consciousness of such operations of the mind that Lonergan seeks to draw our attention.

Attending to such operations is through heightening awareness of one's conscious intending in the operations. This is not another operation because operations always intend objects. The invitation is to an attentive awareness that operations not only intend an object but also reveal an intending subject. This is possible because consciousness is 'me' experiencing myself operating and as present to self and world.

Lonergan's conclusion is that to be a knower, in the full sense outlined in the previous section, is a structure of experiencing, understanding and judging that can be verified in the data of consciousness accessible through experience of the operations involved. It means experiencing $x$, understanding the intelligibility of $x$, and verifying that intelligibility by reference to experienced instances of $x$, thus enabling judgment about truth and reality. To

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know ourselves as knowers, therefore, consists in, (1) experiencing our experiencing, understanding and judging, (2) understanding our experience of experiencing, understanding and judging, and (3) judging that our understanding of our experiencing, understanding and judging can reasonably be held to be true by reference to our relevant experience.

It will be noted that Lonergan begins with the individual subject as a centre of consciousness but he is also aware that human subjects are also from birth continually being formed by relationship with others, and to time and place, history and environment, in a very complex matrix that produces a 'polymorphism' of human consciousness.

## 4.6  The Structure of Insight

### 4.6.1 A Moving Viewpoint

*Insight* is written from a moving viewpoint that is developmental.  In Lonergan's words from the Introduction:

> it must begin from a minimal viewpoint and a minimal context; it will exploit that minimum to raise a further question that enlarges the viewpoint and the context; it will proceed with the enlarged viewpoint and context only as long as is necessary to raise still deeper issues that again transform the basis and the terms of reference of the inquiry; and clearly, this device can be repeated not merely once or twice but as often as may be required to reach the universal viewpoint and the completely concrete context that embraces every aspect of reality. [15]

The dynamics of the moving viewpoint distinguish between a lower and an upper context.

The lower context is the subject actively engaged in being intelligent in any field, having insights and reaching new understandings and knowledge.  The upper context is reflection on that activity in order to understand it and arrive at a judgment on what understanding is,

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[15] *Insight,* 18. The question of the meaning of 'universal viewpoint' is something that Lonergan discusses later, in chapter 17, as meaning "a potential totality of genetically and dialectically ordered viewpoints." pp564-568.

in itself.  Lonergan's concern is to identify the structure of full human knowing and the ground of its self-appropriation in data of consciousness.

### 4.6.2 Insight as Activity and as Knowledge

The work is structured in two Parts.  Part One is entitled '*Insight as Activity*' and may be understood as focussing on the question 'What am I doing when I am knowing?'  Part Two *'Insight as Knowledge'* addresses the questions, 'why is doing that knowing?' and 'What do and can I know when I do it?'[16]

The ten chapters of Part one deal with the occurrence of insights and their fundamental importance in cognition and heuristic structures.  Lonergan begins with the famous example of insight in the story of Archimedes rushing naked from the baths crying '*Eureka!*'  He identifies insights as a response to inquiry that is a function of internal rather than external conditions and thus is altogether different from sensation.  An insight pivots between the concrete and the abstract.  In the case of Archimedes, the problem of the gold content of a particular crown was solved by an idea (prompted by an 'image' - the sight of water displacement) that fluid displacement would provide a solution by weighing the crown in water.  Insights are into the concrete world of sense and imagination and add intelligibility.  They may become an accepted part of our thinking and make further learning possible.  They may also be into oversights or the unintelligible and thus 'inverse insights', revealing the unintelligent or unreasonable and the need for further inquiry and openness to other possibilities.  The crucial role of understanding indicates that concepts do not emerge randomly but in conjunction with insight.  Definitions originate from insights

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[16] Lonergan spoke of the "three linked questions" some years later. Lonergan, *Collection*. 37.

that, considered together, reveal a patterned set of concepts. A critical distinction is drawn between nominal and explanatory definitions. Both are the result of insights, but nominal definitions deal only with the correct use of names or terminology whereas explanatory definitions provide knowledge about objects denoted by the terms.[17]

Examples from mathematics (chapter 1) and science (chapters 2-5) provide the basis for understanding insights as fundamental to the development of both classical and statistical laws and heuristic structures necessary for further understanding and knowledge. Such examples assume a disinterested knower motivated by the pure desire to know, which is to consider intelligence as operating without any distortions introduced by prejudice or bias. Common sense insights, where the desire to know is motivated by limited, practical and pragmatic interests, are then discussed (chapter 6-7), together with various forms of bias that commonly distort the pure desire to know. Insofar as human beings are insightful, reasonable and responsible, there will be progress and development in individuals and society. Decline and decay result from being unintelligent, unreasonable and irresponsible.[18]

An exploration of the notion of 'thing' follows in (chapter 8). Living plants or creatures exist in and through various organic systems that operate as schemes of recurrence that occur and recur according to a schedule of probabilities of emergence and survival. A generalized emergent probability is understood as the actualisation of the immanent intelligibility of the universe. A 'thing', therefore, is the subsistent unity and concrete, dynamic identity that exists in and through schemes of recurrence. It is not to be confused

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[17] *Insight*, 35-37.
[18] See *Insight,* 8, for a brief summary of the argument of chapters 6 and 7.

with 'bodies' or the matter of a 'thing'. A dynamic universe of emerging 'things', existing and co-operating in their various schemes of recurrence, is difficult to grasp because human beings operate in animal and biological, as well as cognitional, schemes of recurrence. The problem of the two forms of knowledge, and a general bias toward common sense over theory, contributes to the difficulty because it is easily concluded, in common sense terms, that 'obviously' a 'thing' is that which is perceived by the senses. By contrast, in terms of scientific theory and the complementarity of classical and statistical investigations, the dynamism of proportionate being may be understood as a world view in which generalized emergent probability supplies the initial coincidental manifolds of events in which higher conjugate forms emerge.[19]

The question of reflective understanding and judgment is addressed in the two concluding chapters of Part One. Many insights may occur but frequently they will be wrong. It is one thing to have insights that respond to 'why' questions, such as 'why won't my car start?' It is another to engage in assessing the insights that arise and may possibly provide the correct answer. The question to be addressed will be one of truth or falsity, as in 'Is the battery flat?' The answer anticipated is either 'yes' or 'no'. In the act of judgment, by an act of reflective understanding, thought and reality are united through a grasp of what Lonergan terms the virtually unconditioned. A prospective judgment is virtually unconditioned when the evidence for its affirmation is sufficient because no further relevant questions remain to be answered. Checking other components dependent on the battery has to be done. A judgment becomes a virtually unconditioned when it has conditions that have been fulfilled.

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[19] *Insight,* 139-151, 154-157, 284-287, 484-488.

Lonergan's position on the virtually unconditioned as a crucial constitutive factor in judgment is of central importance to the whole work.[20]

To respond to Lonergan's invitation is to discover in oneself a sequence of operations in the process of cognition that form three levels. On the first level, experience of data (of sense and of consciousness) raises, on the second level, questions for intelligence, resulting in insights formulated as concepts or hypotheses that raise, on a third level, questions for reflection that pose the question of judgment. "The second level presupposes and complements the first. The third level presupposes and complements the second."[21]

Part Two, *'Insight as Knowledge'*, begins with the basis of self-knowledge expressed in the phrase 'Self-affirmation of the Knower' entitling chapter 11. Readers are invited to make affirmation of the truth and reality of their knowledge of their knowing on the basis thus far developed. It consists in a reflective grasp and affirmation of one's own operations of experiencing, understanding and judging as three interrelated levels of the dynamic process of coming to know.[22] Such an affirmation, of course, is not possible simply as assent to an argument. While Lonergan is expressing what he regards as the correct position on cognition, it can only become a position for those who, on the basis of discernment of their own operations in coming to know, are able to grasp and affirm it as true. Hence, it is fundamentally an invitation to reflect on experience and only secondarily, but importantly, does it become a position capable of being argued.

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[20] *Insight*, 305-306.
[21] *Insight*, 299.
[22] Lonergan's fullest account of the consciousness that grounds the possibility of self-affirmation of the knower is given in *Insight,* 343-352.

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Since knowledge of oneself as a knower is complete only when a stand is taken on basic issues, Lonergan develops basic positions on knowing and reality and objectivity in chapters 11-13. Enlightenment on the structure of the known leads to addressing questions that have dominated the history of philosophy. Unsurprisingly, his account of a basic position on the connection of knowing and reality is heuristic, as follows:

> It will be a basic position (1) if the real is the concrete universe of being and not a subdivision of the 'already out there now'; (2) if the subject becomes known when it affirms itself intelligently and reasonably and so is not known yet in any prior 'existential' state; and (3) if objectivity is conceived as a consequence of intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, and not as a property of vital anticipation, extroversion, and satisfaction.[23]

Basic positions enable Lonergan to give an account of the structure of the universe of being proportionate to the human intellect and thus provide a basis for an approach to metaphysics that is the subject of chapters 14-17.

Mistaking the unquestionable and indubitable 'givenness' of experience for objective knowing leads to an assumption of a fundamental separation between a knowing subject and known objects. The problem of knowing then becomes that of understanding the connection between subject and object. By identifying cognitional structure as a normative pattern of operations, Lonergan is able to indicate the misleading nature of the question in one very significant paragraph.

> It supposes the knower to know himself and asks how he can know anything else. Our answer involves two elements. On the one hand, we contend that, while the knower may experience himself or think about himself without judging, still he cannot know himself until he makes the correct affirmation, 'I am,' and then he knows himself as being and as object. On the other hand, we contend that other judgments are equally possible and reasonable, so that through experience, inquiry, and reflection there arises knowledge of other objects both as beings and as being other than the knower. Hence we place transcendence, not in going beyond a known knower, but in heading for being, within which there are positive differences and, among such differences, the difference between object and subject. Inasmuch as such judgments occur, there are in fact

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[23] *Insight*, 413.

objectivity and transcendence; and whether or not such judgments are correct is a distinct question to be resolved along the lines reached in the analysis of judgment.[24]

The object intended by questions and the pure desire to know, therefore, is reality or being. Being is to be understood notionally as "the objective of the pure desire to know."[25] It is an all-inclusive heuristic notion encompassing all that is or may be known. Since knowing only takes place at the level of judgment, "being is what is to be known by the totality of true judgments" or "the complete set of answers to the complete set of questions".[26] The notion of being, therefore, is prior to, and immanent within, the dynamism of the desire to know in the form of questions seeking that which is to be known. It is also that which constitutes the answers as cognitional. In summary, experiencing, understanding and judging are related as three levels of a cognitional process that intends being, mediates the subject as subject, and relates the knowing subject to other knowers. The conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that the structure of knowing corresponds to the structure of the known. Lonergan describes the correspondence or 'isomorphism' between knowing and known in the following analytic premise:

> If the knowing consists of a related series of acts and the known is the related set of contents of these acts, then the pattern of the relations between the acts is similar in form to the pattern of the relations between the contents of the acts.[27]

To know the structure of knowing, therefore, is to know the structure of being that is proportionate to human knowing, namely finite being. A metaphysics indicating the structure (not the content) of what may be known may be derived from the known structure of knowing and is verifiable in so far as its statements "can be shown to imply statements

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[24] *Insight,* 401-402. The analysis of judgment is treated in 304-340.
[25] *Insight,* 372.
[26] *Insight,* 374.
[27] *Insight,* 424.

regarding cognitional fact".[28]  Epistemology and metaphysics are dependent on the isomorphism of knowing with its term truth and being.

### 4.6.3 The Human Situation, Faith and Theology

Lonergan intended *Insight* to be the preparatory and introductory work necessary for an exploration of the question of theological method.[29]  He regarded the moving viewpoint of *Insight* as one "that advances towards faith and theology" in its final chapters and especially in the Epilogue.[30].

The 'advance' toward faith and theology is prompted by questions that arise naturally and spontaneously about consistency between knowing and deciding and acting and about the human situation in the world.  Such questions concern the notion of the good, human freedom, and the problem of evil and the method of approach to them is addressed under the heading 'The Possibility of Ethics' in Chapter 18.  Lonergan seeks to demonstrate that "an ethics results from the compound structure of one's knowing and doing"[31].  The question, "Can man know more than the intelligibility immanent in the world of possible experience?" is addressed in chapter 19.  It addresses the notion of God from the perspective of whether knowledge of the structure of knowing and the known can provide

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[28] ———, *Insight*. 5. The structure of knowing as experiencing, understanding and judging is paralleled by the structure of potency, form and act found in classical metaphysics. Potency corresponds to the level of experience because it refers to data given in experience that is potentially intelligible. Form corresponds to the level of understanding because it refers to the intelligibility of data that enables it to be understood. Act corresponds to the level of judgment because in coming to judgment a claim is being made to know that which "is". Various terminology may used, including 'actual', 'exists', is 'real' or 'true', is a 'fact'.

| | [ Judgment | Existence/Reality ("Act') ] | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Knowing | [ Understanding | Intelligibility ('Form') ] | Being |
| | [ Experience | Potentiality ('Potency') ] | |

[29] In 1981, Lonergan recalled that "in the first three years of writing *Insight*, I was exploring towards a method in theology. When I was told, 'You are going to teach in Rome in a year's time,' I said: I'll finish this off; God knows when I'll be able to do work in theology. (That's the problem when you have 1,750 students!) Lambert, *Caring About Meaning*. 95.

[30] *Insight,* 766.

[31] *Insight*, 23.

any light on the question of God.[32]   Granted that possibility, the reconciliation of such

knowledge with the intractable reality of evil in the world  is addressed in the final chapter.

Lonergan was later, in the 1975 paper "Mission and Spirit", to summarize his approach, in

*Insight*, to these questions.   Maintaining that the fact of human progress has to be

considered as well as the fact of human sin and moral impotence to remedy the situation, he

states that:

> man needs and may seek redemption, deliverance, salvation. But when it comes, it comes as the
> charity that dissolves the hostility and the divisions of past injustice and present hatred; it comes
> as hope that withstands psychological, economic, political, social, cultural determinations; it
> comes with the faith that can liberate reason from the rationalizations that blinded it. [33]

The motivation and destination of the work is identified in the concluding Epilogue that is

written, "not from the moving viewpoint  …  but from the terminal viewpoint of a believer,

a Catholic, and, it happens, a professor of dogmatic theology."[34]   The purpose of *Insight* is

described from that vantage point as providing "an essay in aid of a personal appropriation

of one's rational self-consciousness."[35]   Such a self-appropriation,

> .. begins with cognitional theory, expands into a metaphysics and an ethics, mounts to a
> conception and an affirmation of God, only to be confronted with the problem of evil that
> demands the transformation of self-reliant intelligence into an *intellectus quarens fidem.*  Only at
> the term of that search for faith, for the new and higher collaboration of minds that has God as its
> author and guide, could the desired summary and completion be undertaken; and then, I believe,
> it would prove to be, not some brief appendage to the present work, but the inception of a far
> larger one.[36]

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[32] Lonergan was later to acknowledge as an "incongruity" the fact that in chapter 19 "while my cognitional theory was based on long and methodical appeal to experience, in contrast my account of God's existence and attributes made no appeal to religious experience." Bernard Lonergan, "Philosophy of God, and Theology," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). 171.

[33] Lonergan, *3rd Collection*. 31/32. In a footnote Lonergan says that the "paragraph summarizes what I wrote in *Insight*" and refers to passages in chapters 6, 18 and 20, pp 239-267, 643-656, 710-725, 740-751 in Collected Works edition.)

[34] *Insight,* 754.

[35] *Insight,* 769.

For Lonergan, from his terminal viewpoint, the process of self-appropriation leads to heightened awareness of a basic confrontation or duality in human lives and history. The pure desire for knowledge and the good exists alongside the presence of moral impotence and evil as the result of cumulative self-serving and group bias. Faith is the only possible solution to this fundamental dilemma. Because seeking solutions is intelligent, reasonable and responsible, seeking a solution to the problem of evil through faith is also intelligent, reasonable and responsible.

It is clear that, beside the intellectual desire to understand human understanding, a theological motivation is also present in the writing of *Insight*, as is also evident in his work on *Verbum*. Every written work is motivated by the terminal viewpoint of its author that is both the result of, and reflected in, positions taken on basic questions. A moving viewpoint progresses toward ever more inclusive conclusions and *Insight,* as a search for an understanding of understanding, leads to a search for a solution to the dilemma of human incapacity for sustained development. Lonergan's attempt to establish positions strictly from a moving viewpoint, "whose exigencies, I trust, I have been observing honestly and sincerely", leads to a call for "a higher collaboration which it has envisaged and to which it leads".[37] Such a higher collaboration, for Lonergan, would bring together developments in human knowledge in sciences and scholarship with understanding of faith. "If one is not to affirm reason at the expense of faith or faith at the expense of reason, one is called upon to

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[36] *Insight,*753f. In a footnote Lonergan adds- "Since I believe that 'personal relations' can be studied adequately only in this far larger and more concrete context, the skimpy treatment accorded them in the present work is not to be taken as a denial of their singular importance in human living."
[37] *Insight,* 754.

produce a synthesis that unites two orders of truth and to give evidence of a successful symbiosis of two principles of knowledge."[38]

Lonergan reaches such a synthesis based on the relation of subjectivity and objectivity provided through insight into the process of cognition that enables the possibility of a personal appropriation of 'rational self-consciousness' as it is termed in *Insight*. Because it begins from the relation of 'inner' thought and 'outer' reality, such self-appropriation is also necessarily the beginning to which readers of *Insight* are invited to give attention and discover and verify in themselves.

> It is a necessary beginning, for unless one breaks the duality in one's knowing, one doubts that understanding correctly is knowing. Under the pressure of that doubt, either one will sink into the bog of knowing that is without understanding, or else one will cling to understanding but sacrifice knowing on the altar of an immanentism, an idealism, a relativism. From the horns of that dilemma one escapes only through the discovery – and one has not made it yet if one has no clear memory of its startling strangeness – that there are two quite different realisms, that there is an incoherent realism, half animal and half human, that poses as a halfway house between materialism and idealism, and on the other hand that there is an intelligent and reasonable realism between which and materialism the halfway house is idealism.[39]

Lonergan later identifies the experience of self-appropriation, and its 'startling strangeness', as an 'intellectual conversion'.[40] A major reason for difficulty in the mind's struggle for self-appropriation of the connection between thought and reality is that insight is impossible to imagine. An inner 'awareness' of a reality that is beyond imagining is not easily conceptualised. Its reality can only be verified in terms of intentional acts of the

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[38] *Insight,* 754/755.
[39] *Insight,* 22.
[40] Lonergan, *Method*. 238/9. It is interesting to note that Lonergan had spoken on 'Radical Intellectual Conversion', in 1950-51, in the Thomas More Institute Lectures on Intelligence and Reality. See Editorial Notes, footnote i, p287 of Lonergan, *Collection*. For an explanation of the meaning of references to 'halfway house' see Mark Morelli, *At the Threshold of the Halfway House; a Study of Bernard Lonergan's Encounter with John Alexander Stewart.* (Boston: The Lonergan Institute at Boston College, 2007). especially pp255-259.

mind that forms part of data of consciousness.[41] Self-appropriation of oneself as an intellectual being capable, through a compound of operations, of knowing reality and being, is knowledge of oneself as intentionally related to a whole universe of being through the mind's intellectual activity. Once that insight dawns, and is judged to be true through a process of critical reflection, an experience of 'startling strangeness' follows. Lonergan later described it as "being dazed and disoriented" as one becomes gradually oriented to a new perspective on everything that results from a new understanding of the relation of 'intellectual being' to other aspects of being human and a whole universe of being.

> The transition from the neglected and truncated subject to self-appropriation is not a simple matter. It is not just a matter of finding out and assenting to a number of propositions. More basically, it is a matter of conversion, of a personal philosophic experience, of moving out of a world of sense and of arriving, dazed and disoriented for a while, into a universe of being.[42]

It is from such a beginning that the conclusions in *Insight* arose, with their huge scope and countless implications for understanding the human situation within a universe of being.

## 4.7 *From* Insight *to* Method in T*heology – the Existential Subject*

The preceding paragraphs have already referred to changes in terminology indicating that in addressing further questions, particularly on the level of deliberation and choice, there was a widening in Lonergan's approach in the period in which he was teaching theology in Rome (1954-65) and beginning a course on theological method in 1961-62 and a lead up to the publication of *Method* in 1972. While *Insight* had concentrated on the intellectual pattern of experience and initially referred to mathematics and the natural sciences as the clearest examples for enabling insight into insight, intelligence was also identified in the operation of common sense in the vast complexity denoted by the general term 'human

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[41] For a description of personal experience of intellectual conversion see Liddy, *Transforming Light*. 204-208.
[42] Lonergan, *2nd Collection*. 79.

living'.  From the perspective of his aim to understand understanding, Lonergan affirms that the process of human living is one "in which rational consciousness with its reflection and criticism, its deliberation and choice, exerts a decisive influence".  He also recognises that many other factors influence human deliberations and choices.[43]  In *Insight*, they are recognised as factors constituting the 'Dramatic Pattern of Experience', which together with the 'biological', 'intellectual' and 'aesthetic' patterns, influence the extent of effective human freedom available in situations in which deliberation and choice is made.[44]  The need for further exploration of the process of deliberation and choice becomes evident as the focus changes to method in theology.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that in the period following *Insight*, more attention is given, in Lonergan's lectures and writings, to the subject operating at the level of deliberation and choice.  The isomorphism of cognitional process and reality is based on the operations of the human mind providing the normative basis for understanding and knowledge.  The approach to method in theology, therefore, will be through consideration of the operations of the theologian's mind as this is prior to concern with the object or content of theology, which is addressed only through the mind's operations in regard to the question of method.  As Lonergan indicated when contrasting mathematics and natural sciences with human sciences in lectures on existentialism in 1957, philosophers and theologians are part of the data or object about which they speak.

> It follows that a broadening of the horizon in a field that includes man is not merely a matter of new concepts, new principles, new methods, new topics, new approaches.  Just as there is a

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[43] *Insight,* 212.  See also 622-3 and 714-5.
[44] *Insight,* 204-227, 642-647.

revolution on the side of the conceptualisation, so there has to be a revolution within the subject himself. ....

In other words, the thinker has to be on the level of what he thinks about and when his thought moves to a higher level, he himself has to move to a higher level. Otherwise his thought will not really be on the level; he may repeat the words of the master but he cannot give the words the meaning they had in the utterances of the master. ...

This point can be summarised in a phrase: the existential gap. The existential gap consists in the fact that the reality of the subject lies beyond his own horizon. .... It is insofar as the subject does not really know himself that we have the fundamental problems in philosophy and the fundamental problem of incommunicability. Insofar as the subjects are beyond their own horizon, you cannot get at them; they have not got at themselves, and it is through our getting hold of ourselves that you can get at them.[45]

This concern with the horizon of the subject is regarded by Frederick Crowe as one of the

"milestones of progress" in this period. He finds other such milestones:

in the Latin treatises of this period with their work on the consciousness of Christ and the theology of the three divine subjects; in the concluding section of the 1964 paper "Cognitional Structure" with its brief but important linking of subjectivity to objectivity; most of all, in the Aquinas Lecture of 1968, "The Subject":[46]

Terms that come to the fore in this period such as horizon, meaning, sublation, authenticity,

value, mediation, conversion, dialectic, differentiations of consciousness, and historical

mindedness indicate concerns that will become central to *Method in Theology*. 'Meaning',

for example, is considered not simply in regard to cognitional operations, as in *Verbum* and

*Insight,* but as constitutive of social institutions and human cultures. Human living is in a

world constituted by meaning, as something intended, but meaning is always in process,

having a history, and this raises questions about the control of meaning.[47] In the 1968

Aquinas Lecture on "The Subject", Lonergan expands on the theme of his 1964

Introduction to *Verbum*. The subject is discussed under headings of the subject as

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[45] Bernard Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, ed. Philip J McShane, vol. 18 CWL (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). 280-282.

[46] Frederick E. Crowe, "An Exploration of Lonergan's New Notion of Value," in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989). 54

[47] See "Time and Meaning", pp94-121, and "The Analogy of Meaning", pp183-213, Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran Robert C. Croken, vol. 6 CWL (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). and "Dimensions of Meaning" pp232-245, Lonergan, *Collection*.

'Neglected', 'Truncated', 'Immanentist', 'Existential' and 'Alienated'. Crowe comments that in the lecture:

> we have the explicit abandonment of faculty psychology, the addition of deliberation as a distinct level of the existential subject, the doctrine of the sublation of lower levels by the higher, and other elements that prepare us for the transition brought to completion in Method.[48]

'Faculty' psychology is the attribution to the subject of the faculties of intellect, an understanding that is superseded by understanding intentional consciousness as operating on different levels. Crowe discerns development from the position in *Insight* that the good is the intelligible and reasonable. Lonergan's identification of the good as an intentional response to feeling in values, places values on a level of consciousness that is distinct from, and goes beyond, the three cognitional levels of *Insight*.[49] A further question, "What ought I choose or do?" is added to the three cognitional questions as a fourth level of responsibility and decision. It is on that level that human subjects deliberate and evaluate options, make the decisions and carry out the actions that constitute them as the person that they make of themselves. The subject operates intentionally (i.e., as oriented to reality/being) on each of the four levels of consciousness and the levels are understood as successive levels of 'sublation', a term that Lonergan uses in Karl Rahner's sense as:

> .. what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all the proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.[50]

The intelligent subject sublates the level of experience in preserving, completing and going beyond the experiential when insights give rise to understanding of that which is

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[48] Crowe, "An Exploration of Lonergan's New Notion of Value." 54/55.
[49] "The Subject" in Lonergan, *2nd Collection*. 80-81.

[50] Lonergan, *Method*. 241.

experienced. As rational subjects we sublate when we "question our own understanding, check our formulations and expressions, ask whether we have got things right, marshal the evidence *pro* and *con*, judge this to be so and that not to be so."[51] The three levels constituting rational consciousness are sublated in the existential or responsible subject making decisions about the good and worthwhile and taking action or failing to do so. The decisions of the subject are rational and moral insofar as there is a consistency between knowing and doing. This raises the question of authenticity in decision-making and acting and the inability of human beings to be consistently attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible. As Lonergan points out, human authenticity is never a permanent achievement but "always precarious, always a withdrawal from unauthenticity, always in danger of slipping back into unauthenticity."[52] The relation of religious conversion to the moral and intellectual conversions ideally envisaged in the normative operations of four levels of consciousness, and of religious belief to that which may be naturally known, become the central issues in Lonergan's approach to theological method. As he was later to reflect, "*Method in Theology* uses the first three levels but it is principally concerned with the fourth level, on which the grace of God, and faith, hope and charity, are exercised."[53]

The result of such developments in regard to the question of an appropriate method for theology is a radical change from thinking 'classically' and narrowly in terms of theology as reflection on dogma and the mysteries of faith in order to reach an analogous human understanding, to the much broader and prior question of theology as reflection on religion in the context of a particular culture. It is also a question of a normative basis of approach

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[51] "The Subject", in *A Second Collection*, 80.
[52] "The Response of the Jesuit", in *A Second Collection,*169.
[53] Lambert, *Caring About Meaning*. 91.

that, based on the dynamic structure of human consciousness, intends intellectual, moral and religious conversion; an intending that is "the unfolding of a single transcendental intending of plural, interchangeable objectives."[54]

## *4.8 Method in Theology*
### 4.8.1 Method as a means of mediating between a religion and a culture

Method is usually understood simply as the way in which something is done. In regard to theology it becomes the way in which theological statements are produced. To think about method in theology is to think about the thinking that produces theological conclusions. In other words, to address the question of method, theologians are involved in addressing the question of the operation of their own minds as they seek to understand and explain. In considering theological method, Lonergan is not attempting to provide a set of rules or a recipe that may be mindlessly followed. Theological questions are about meaning, a term itself requiring further elucidation, and method is concerned with the requirements necessary for theologians to discover and explain true meaning and, wherever possible. arrive at knowledge rather than opinion or speculation.

As his work in *Verbum* and *Insight* and following foreshadows, Lonergan regards method as consisting in a set of terms and relations based on the operations of the human mind in coming to know and decide. As such, they are applicable to all disciplines in that they account for that which actually takes place in the minds of human subjects. Because they deal with what happens to be the case, rather than what must or ought to be so on the basis of premises brought to the question, they are essentially a matter of self-discovery, of

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[54] "The Subject" in *A Second Collection,* 81. In a footnote, Lonergan points out that these objectives are approximately the Scholastic transcendentals, *ens, unum, verum, bonum* and they are interchangeable in the sense of mutual predication, of *convertuntur*.

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coming to know oneself as a knowing subject rather than being convinced by logical argument. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that self-appropriation of the cognitional and existential operations of one's own mind, in which the subject is experienced, understood and known as subject, is necessary for a differentiated consciousness that distinguishes the four levels of consciousness and their inter-relationship as forming the basis from which a theologian can methodically proceed.

The first part of *Method in Theology*, is a prolegomenon explaining the necessary background essential to method in theology as envisaged by Lonergan. In the first sentence of the Introduction, Lonergan's functional approach to theology as a human activity mediating between a culture and a religion is clearly stated. It reads: "A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix."[55]

Culture is conceived empirically as a matrix of meanings and values informing a way of life. It is always in process and, at any particular time, may be in a period of relative stability, development or decline. An empirical approach regards theology as an ongoing process of discovering and developing meaning, always in response to questions. Questions arise in a particular context, or cultural matrix, and answers require understanding of the context, language and thought forms of various cultures, past and present.[56]

Rejected is the 'classicist' view that regards a particular culture as normative and gives rise to a 'classicist' approach to theology, which, in turn, regards theology as a permanent achievement to which history bears witness. The particular context Lonergan has in mind

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[55] Lonergan, *Method,* xi.
[56] " … hermeneutics and the study of history are basic to all human science. Meaning enters into the very fabric of human living but varies from place to place and from one age to another." *Method,* 81.

is the pre-Vatican II ethos of Catholic theology that had become largely isolated from the methods of science and the historical consciousness of contemporary thought and, therefore, incapable of effective engagement with a changed and changing culture. In one description of the situation he said; "up to Vatican II they were sheltered from the modern world and since Vatican II they have been exposed more and more to the chill winds of modernity".[57] Baldly expressed, the classicist approach had led to a situation where it was "a matter of everyone subscribing to the correct formulae" but that, "was never more than the shabby shell of Catholicism".[58] Lonergan realised that doing theology is a matter of seeking understanding rather than one of reaching timeless truth, because its form of expression will necessarily vary according to culture, and, over time, within any culture.

The first four chapters of *Method* are an exposition of each of the significant elements cited in the introductory sentence. "A theology *mediates* (chapter 1 Method – 'who' and 'how') between *a cultural matrix* (chapter 2 The Human Good – 'where') and *the significance and role* (chapter 3 Meaning – 'why') of *a religion* (chapter 4 Religion – 'what') in that matrix." They provide the basis for arriving in the fifth chapter at the core of theological method in the 'functional specialties' that describe the order and nature of the series of tasks required of theologians.

### 4.8.2 Who mediates theology and how?

The first chapter, entitled 'Method', is a succinct introduction to the invariant normative pattern of spontaneous operations over four levels of consciousness that constitutes the dynamism of the human mind. Lonergan argues that because answers to questions are

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[57] Lonergan, *2nd Collection*. 93. In pp90-96 Lonergan describes the conditions under which Catholic theology had been undertaken and explains what was required to meet the situation.
[58] *Method,* 327.

never complete but always give rise to further questions intending the unknown or the greater good, the subject's intending through questions may be regarded as unrestricted and comprehensive. In that the pattern of operations is *a priori*, as the dynamism of the human mind, it is invariant and transcultural, although the manner of its expression will vary in different times and places. As a normative *a priori* that is unrestricted and comprehensive, the dynamism of conscious intentionality is 'transcendental'. The 'transcendentals', therefore, "are contained in questions prior to the answers".[59] The formulation of transcendental concepts of the intelligible, the true and the real, and the good, is the result of the objectification of the content of intelligent, reasonable and responsible intending.

> But quite distinct from such transcendental concepts, which can be misconceived and often are, there are the prior transcendental notions that constitute the very dynamism of our conscious intending, promoting us from mere experiencing towards understanding, from mere understanding toward truth and reality, from factual knowledge to responsible action.[60]

Questions are the motivator of the dynamism of conscious intending. The dynamic pattern of operations constitutes a 'transcendental method' because it is "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results".[61] It is 'transcendental' because it is comprehensive. It operates in all instances of human knowing, evaluating and deciding. It underlies the particular methods of all natural and human sciences as the basic pattern operating in the minds of subjects undertaking such work. It gives rise to the 'transcendental precepts' that direct the subject to be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable and be responsible. As normative in all human knowing and deciding, the pattern is transcultural and provides a basis both for understanding the past and for cross cultural communication. Transcendental method, therefore, inheres in the

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[59] *Method,* 11.
[60] *Method,* 12.
[61] *Method,* 4.

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basic pattern of operations but if it is to have its full normative field of reference it must become explicit in the individual subject. The subject operating authentically in accord with the dynamism of conscious intentionality, is therefore:

> a rock on which one can build. …The rock is the subject in his conscious, unobjectified attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility. The point to the labor of objectifying the subject and his conscious operations is that thereby one begins to learn what these are and that they are.[62]

Any revision of the understanding of the pattern of operations will be derived from the conscious and intentional operations themselves. The pattern of operations itself is not subject to revision because it is ourselves operating, the method in all methods. Transcendental method is, however, only a part of theological method, supplying "the basic anthropological component." In Lonergan's view, "to advance from transcendental to theological method, it is necessary to add a consideration of religion. And before we can speak of religion, we must first say something about the human good and about human meaning."[63] The following two chapters, therefore, regard 'The Human Good', and 'Meaning' before he comes to 'Religion'.

### 4.8.3 The Situation into which Theology is Mediated

Since the basic fact about human beings is the intentionality of consciousness that is the quest for truth, reality and goodness, Lonergan outlines the elements that constitute the human good. His first simple sentence – "What is good, always is concrete." - is absolutely fundamental.[64] The 'good' is not to be confused with the 'idea of the good'. The subject is

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[62] *Method,* 19-20. Since the basic pattern of operations is spontaneous, as Lonergan states on p18, it operates whether it is objectified and known or not. This, as Fred Lawrence mentions in a delightful understatement, is something "which doesn't seem too bad, if you think about it". "The Expanding Challenge to Authenticity in *Insight*: Lonergan's Hermeneutics of Facticity," *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy & Education* 15/3 (2004), 427-456.
[63] *Method,* 25.
[64] *Method,* 27.

considered concretely as desiring to do the good and as being that which is required for it to eventuate. Human good is regarded as both individual and social and as being achieved inasmuch as there is actual development or progress through attending to the development of skills, of responses to feelings in the direction of true values, and of judgments of value in the context of a social, cultural and religious heritage. 'Fact' and 'value' are united through the subject intentionally seeking to know the true and real and to do the good by being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible.

> Such judgments of value are objective or merely subjective inasmuch as they proceed or do not proceed from a self-transcending subject. Their truth or falsity, accordingly, has its criterion in the authenticity or lack of authenticity of the subject's being. But the criterion is one thing and the meaning of the judgment is another. To say that an affirmative judgment of value is true is to say what objectively is or would be good or better. To say that an affirmative judgment of value is false is to say what objectively is not or would not be good or better.[65]

Normal development from childhood to mature adult indicates that development of intentional responses to value involves movement away from desiring immediate gratification towards acceptance of values that result in judgments that may involve self-sacrificial love. It is through making decisions and taking action that the subject constitutes him or herself and develops a scale of value preferences. The authentic subject, who operates in accordance with the transcendental precepts, is the ground of morally responsible decisions and actions in moving from the cognitive self-transcendence of knowing to moral self-transcendence in doing what is known in judgments of value to be truly good.

Of course, the reality of our world is not that of continuous growth and development but one of progress and decline. Violation of the transcendental precepts leads to the aberrations of the unreasonable and irresponsible, which may be rationalized and become

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[65] *Method,* 37.

habitual and, therefore, increasingly difficult to correct. So it is that in various ways and means, families, communities, institutions and nations, seek to educate, motivate and legislate to encourage responsible development in intentional responses to value.

Lonergan points out that immanently generated knowledge is only a small part of our knowing. Most of our knowledge, of both fact and value, is through the process of belief. As individual members of a society we operate on the basis of believing others because society cannot function without the operation of such belief. Believing is operative not only in the area of common sense practical knowledge but also in the field of science and theory. Scientific research proceeds on the basis of the reported results of work undertaken by others and only calls it into question if new data demands such a revision. Knowledge acquired through belief acquires an historical dimension in the believing acceptance of what has been handed on by previous generations as a social, cultural and religious heritage. Yet all that we know through believing was at sometime immanently generated knowledge in someone as the result of the operations of human cognitional structure. Because that which becomes known in correct judgment is an instance of objective reality, it is independent of the mind that grasped it and able to be communicated to others, even if they have not yet grasped it for themselves. Human knowledge may be understood as having the character of "a common fund from which each may draw by believing, to which each may contribute in the measure that he performs his cognitional operations properly and reports their results accurately."[66]

When we believe we are depending upon the authenticity of someone else. The first step in believing, therefore, is not taken by the person who believes but by the person who is

[66] *Method,* 43.

believed. A general judgment of the value of believing is a second step that involves acknowledging the value of collaboration enabled through division of labour in the acquisition of knowledge. Refusal to accept anything other than immanently generated knowledge, because of the possibility of error, would be to restrict knowledge to such an extent that it would amount to "a regression to primitivism".[67] Coming to knowledge of the value of believing in general is, itself, an instance of immanently generated knowledge.

The third step in the process of belief involves a particular judgment of value that affirms the trustworthiness of a particular source, witness or authority. Ascertaining the reliability of a source is a matter of assessing whether cognitional self-transcendence has been reached in judgments of fact or moral self-transcendence in respect of judgments of value. This will often involve checking with other sources. The value of believing a particular source, therefore, will often have aspects of immanently generated knowledge while also being dependent on further acts of belief involving other sources.

The fourth step is the decision to believe. It is a choice grounded in the general and particular judgments of value of steps two and three. "The combination of the general and particular judgment yields the conclusion that the statement ought to be believed for, if believing is a good thing, then what can be believed should be believed."[68] The final step is the act of believing.

While the order of acts in the process of coming to believe is other than in immanently generated knowledge, the operations involved are intelligent, reasonable and responsible. The most significant difference between immanently generated knowledge and knowing by

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[67] *Method,* 45.
[68] *Method,* 46.

belief is that in the former, knowledge develops from 'below' by way of discovery while knowledge acquired through belief is received from 'above', through tradition and teaching. While Lonergan does not directly refer to the two kinds of development in this chapter, it is helpful to bear in mind at this point and also to recall a further connection in his analysis of the two orders of approach used by Aquinas when dealing with the question of processions in the Trinity.[69]

The dynamic of development from below has been identified as ascending levels of self-transcendence in the subject desiring knowledge and in quest of the good of true value, with knowing occurring on the third level and moral self-transcendence being a fourth level intending consistency between knowing and doing in judgments of value. Development from above originates in knowing communicated by others and proposed for acceptance. It is the way that children learn and discover their identity and heritage as part of a family, larger social group, religion, and nation. They come to know through belief by assenting to values as good through the experience of loving dependence on family and a sense of belonging to a larger community. Over time, through questions and answers, understanding develops of various aspects of that which is known by belief. Knowledge through belief and its developing understanding will continue to influence their patterns of experience as they grow to maturity. Occasionally, particularly in adolescence, there will be tension and conflict between development from below and development from above. This is a necessary stage in growth and development of the subject as responsibility is taken for making decisions and constituting oneself. The relationship of immanently generated

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[69] An explicit distinction between development from below upwards and above downwards is made in the 1975 lecture "Healing and Creating in History". *A Third Collection,* 106. While applicable to the present topic, it will become even more so in the discussion of functional specialization in section 4.9 below.

knowledge and knowledge through belief, therefore, can be understood as necessary and complementary.

Lonergan takes up, from Joseph de Finance, the notion of the distinction between the exercise of horizontal and vertical liberty in the subject engaged in the activity of responding to the transcendental notion of value. "Horizontal liberty is the exercise of liberty within a determinate horizon and from the basis of a corresponding existential stance. Vertical liberty is the exercise of liberty that selects that stance and the corresponding horizon."[70] The question of the exercise of liberty is one that arises for theologians operating as authentic subjects within a tradition and intending understanding and judgments of fact and value. Conclusions reached may require decisions that call for the exercise of vertical liberty, with possibly unknown consequences for the theologian in relation to the tradition and its institutional authorities.

In summary, the human good is individual and social. Individuals do not operate solely to meet their own needs but also cooperate in order to meet one another's needs, thus creating a good of order, a scale or hierarchy of value. Social institutions develop in order to promote cooperation and assist individuals to develop skills and fulfil roles that enable the necessary cooperation for the greater good of all. Networks of social order depend upon the authentic, attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible participation of individuals to function successfully and create the good of order. Situations and periods of decline are the result of inattention, oversight, unreasonableness and irresponsibility. This reflection on the human good is directly related to religion when Lonergan observes "that a religion

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[70] *Method,* 40.

that promotes self-transcendence to the point, not merely of justice, but of self-sacrificing love, will have a redemptive role in human society inasmuch as such love can undo the mischief of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress."[71]

### 4.8.4 Mediation of Theology is the Mediation of Meaning

An understanding of what is meant by 'meaning' is required if the task of theology is understood as mediating "between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix." Lonergan provides the following summary of his approach to the question.

> Meaning is embodied or carried in human intersubjectivity, in art, in symbols, in language, and in the lives and deeds of persons. It can be clarified by a reduction to its elements. It fulfils various functions in human living. It opens upon quite different realms. Its techniques vary in the successive stages of man's historical development.[72]

While our (and Lonergan's) focus has been on the dynamism of conscious intentionality in the human subject as the basis of transcendental method, the wider context in which the human subject operates must also be borne in mind. At the most basic level, every human being is recognisably a member of the human race. There is a basic inter-subjectivity, a 'we' of collective identity that stems from simply being human and is prior to the 'I' of self-identity or of belonging to particular groups. Meaning may be conveyed and received through inter-subjectivity, whether by 'body language', words or deeds, or art and symbols.

As one would expect, Lonergan considers meaning from the basis of the operations of intentional consciousness and its results in the conclusions reached through judgments of

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[71] *Method,* 55.
[72] *Method,* 57.

fact or value.[73]  The reality of meaning reached solely through intelligibility is affirmed. The example given is the affirmation of the existence of the logarithm of the square root of minus one as distinguished from the affirmation, through data of sense, of the existence of the moon.  Both are held to be 'real', to 'be', to 'exist', on the basis that in each case there are conditions that have been met, resulting in a virtually unconditioned.  The universe of 'being' includes the immaterial, as well as the material, intelligible.  The position taken is identified as "the realist account of full terms of meaning."[74]  The question of the reality of meaning reached solely through intelligibility is, of course, directly relevant to the question of the reality of 'mind' or 'soul' or the transcendent.

The obvious first function of meaning in human living is the cognitive.  It is cognition that "takes us out of the infant's world of immediacy and places us in the adult's world which is a world mediated by meaning."[75]  This larger world comprises the 'real world' in which life is lived.  It is insecure because there is error and deceit as well as truth and honesty.  To this readily apparent aspect of the cognitive function of meaning, Lonergan adds the mediation of immediacy by meaning when cognitional structure is objectified in transcendental method.

Meaning also has an efficient function in that meaning produces results.  The many aspects of our environment that have been created by human beings are the products of acts of

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[73]  Lonergan refers to the sources, acts, and terms of meaning. Its sources are understood as being transcendental in the operations of intentional consciousness and categorical in the determinations reached through those operations. Acts of meaning are understood as paralleling levels of consciousness so that potential acts of meaning relate to experience, formal acts to understanding, full acts to judgments and constitutive or effective acts to fourth level decisions or actions. Instrumental acts of meaning are expressions that communicate meaning to others and are open to interpretation and misunderstanding as well as correct understanding. A term of meaning is what is meant and can be similarly qualified as formal or full, etc.
[74] *Method,* 76.
[75] *Method,* 76.

meaning. A third constitutive function of meaning was mentioned above as an example of the widening of perspective of Lonergan when the question of method in theology became his major focus rather than the intellectual pattern of experience that was the concern of *Insight*. Meaning as constitutive refers to meaning as intrinsically constitutive of identity in people, cultures and communities. As circumstances continually change, constitutive meaning is subject to a process of adaptation to meet the needs of developing situations. A fourth communicative function of meaning refers to that fact that meaning communicated through various carriers can become a common meaning that forms community.

The significance of the functions of meaning for theology is seen in that "The conjunction of both the constitutive and communicative functions of meaning yield the three key notions of community, existence and history."[76] Community, in all its many forms of expression, is formed and realised through common meaning. It denotes far more than a shared experience or location and may be said to be actual in common judgments of truth and value and realized through common commitments and goals. Human beings are born and live in community as a structure of meaning and value and are 'shaped' by that experience before developing the capacity for their own responsible judgments and decisions. Judgments and decisions that result from such development eventually constitute the person one makes of oneself. As Lonergan comments:

> Such existence may be authentic or unauthentic, and this may occur in two different ways. There is the minor authenticity or unauthenticity of the subject with respect to the tradition that nourishes him. There is the major authenticity that justifies or condemns the tradition itself. In the first case there is passed a human judgment on subjects. In the second case history and, ultimately, divine providence pass judgment on traditions.[77]

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[76] *Method,* 79.
[77] *Method,* 79-80.

In regard to theology and understandings of religious belief, therefore, there are questions of the authenticity of the theologian with regard to the religious beliefs of a tradition and questions of the authenticity of the tradition itself. The authenticity of the tradition is major because insofar as a tradition is unauthentic a theologian is involved in wrong "answers" before addressing a question or even having a question. A tradition provides the context within which the minor question of the authenticity of the subject is realised. In the case of an unauthentic tradition, "in the measure a subject takes the tradition, as it exists, for his standard, in that measure he can do no more than authentically realize unauthenticity."[78]

The major and minor questions of authenticity are linked in the manner that communal decline is a cumulative result of the unauthenticity of individuals. Partial understanding, misunderstanding and unauthentic appropriation of religious belief can develop and affect a whole community and tradition. For this reason Lonergan concludes "that hermeneutics and the study of history are basic to all human science."[79] A judgment of history on the unauthenticity of a tradition will be one that makes clear what was actually going forward in that which the participants believed at the time was taking place. It will be able to detect the operation of various forms of bias, that which was careless, unreasonable and irresponsible, and thus account for the lack of authenticity.

Meaning opens upon different realms of meaning with Lonergan identifying the four main ones as common sense, theory, interiority and transcendence. The necessity of practical decision making for daily life is the realm of common sense meaning, of understanding things or persons in relation to us. The desire to understand things in themselves is to enter

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[78] *Method,* 80.
[79] *Method,* 81.

the realm of theory, of the how and the why of things in relation to themselves. The desire to know oneself as a knower and in relation to the known opens the realm of interiority, of the self in relation to oneself and to all that may be known. The drive to know reality that transcends finite reality opens on the realm of transcendence, of relation of the human to the transcendent or divine. These distinctions of realms of meaning will become important for understanding pluralism of expression in theology and its many specializations.

Three theoretical stages of meaning may be discerned through typifying consciousness as operating in different stages. The mode of common sense, where conscious and intentional operations are operative, is regarded as the first stage of meaning. Theory is a second stage resulting from the addition of reasoning controlled by logic being added to that operative at the first stage. "In a third stage the modes of common sense and theory remain, science asserts its autonomy from philosophy, and there occur philosophies that leave theory to science and take their stand on interiority."[80]

In an historical excursus, Lonergan traces such a development, in the Western tradition, from early language through to the Greek discovery of mind and on to the development of scientific method.[81] Consideration of stages of meaning facilitates recognition of the transformation of consciousness that takes place at every stage. The difference between the stages of common sense and theory is in the critical distance on human experience that theory enables through the discovery of mind or (for Lonergan) consciousness. That which is undifferentiated at the stage of common sense becomes differentiated through the distinction between senses and intellect, the particular and the universal, allowing

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[80] *Method,* 85.
[81] *Method,* 86-99.

formulations produced in the mind to become an object of thought. Such a differentiation of consciousness raises the question of truth or falsity, and control of meaning is made possible that is unavailable at the common sense stage.

The crucial differentiation of consciousness that distinguishes theory as the second stage of meaning from interiority as the third stage is illustrated by Lonergan through the distinction between classical approaches to science as the attainment of definitive truth and unifying laws, versus the contemporary understanding of science as an ongoing process aiming for "an ever better approximation towards the truth" and of, "a specialty for the advance of understanding."[82] The methods used, rather than the results achieved, are the basis of further advance in scientific knowledge. Expansion of knowledge has led to specialization and a consequent fragmentation of knowledge. Communication between specialties and sciences and the unification of knowledge is possible, not through logic or some higher science, but through interiority, which provides access to the processes involved in reaching conclusions that form the basis of method.

The relevance of Lonergan's discussion of the stages of meaning to the theologian is in the recognition of the need to operate in the third stage of meaning in a world where lack of differentiation of consciousness in respect of realms of meaning remains common. Popularisation of the results of science and other disciplines and the availability, via mass media, of torrents of information about anything at all, results in meanings being communicated or received with little or no understanding and judgments made in ignorance. In Lonergan's opinion, "Never has adequately differentiated consciousness

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[82] *Method,* 94.

been more difficult to achieve.  Never has the need to speak effectively to undifferentiated consciousness been greater."[83]

### 4.8.5 Religion as that which is mediated by theology to a culture

The intention of the first three chapters of *Method* has been to indicate how the approach to theology can and must be earthed in a human cultural context.  Theology expressed as ideas related within a timeless system will always seem remote and disconnected from human living.  Lonergan has been making the point that the task of theology is articulation of religious faith within and to the meanings and values informing a cultural matrix.  Only in that way can religious faith make connections and be understood.  Nor is it the case that adequate expression is only in one privileged cultural matrix because method is based on the authenticity of the self-transcending human subject.  It is authenticity, resulting from observance of the transcendental precepts, that is the creative and  sustaining element in all cultures.

The first two sections of the chapter on 'Religion' relate the question of God and self-transcendence to questions addressed in the first three chapters.  Lonergan indicates how the question of God arises from questioning that questions questioning.  Such questions ask about a basic unity to the universe.  'God' enters into consideration of 'Meaning' whenever reflection proceeds to the question of why answers that satisfy the intellect also provide knowledge of the universe.  If the universe is intelligible then the question arises of the possibility or necessity of it having an intelligent ground.  Similarly, in relation to the notion of the 'Good', the ultimate question becomes whether goodness has a possible or

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[83] *Method,* 99.

necessary transcendent ground.  The question of an unrestricted ground of meaning and value arises because the intending of the human subject is unrestricted - an intending toward the transcendent.

Authentic cognitional self-transcendence is achieved insofar as correct judgments of fact are made with respect to insights that provide possible answers to questions for intelligence.  Questions at the level of deliberation and decision intend answers as judgments of value that are to be lived by, leading to the possible realisation of moral self-transcendence.  The capacity for such self-transcendence, Lonergan argues, "becomes an actuality when one falls in love."[84]  Being in love is a judgment and response to the value of another that results in a being for the other.[85]  As a state of 'being-in-love', it has many different forms of expression in human life.  Because the question of God is implicit in all ultimate questions on every level of consciousness, "being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality."[86]  Ultimately, it is God whom we desire to know and love because, intentionally, our desire to know and love is unrestricted.

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[84] *Method*, 105.

[85] This is briefly asserted and may be accepted on the level of experience and common sense. As Lonergan makes clear in *Insight*, knowledge is gained through an understanding of the structure, or recurring pattern of relations, that condition the existence of something. Frederick Crowe distinguished two main recurrent aspects of love in Aquinas, to be borne in mind alongside his insights into cognitional process. The first is appreciation, which is directed to the actual goodness of the beloved and becomes delight, fulfilment, and contentment when appreciation is reciprocated. The second is care and concern, where a feeling of benevolence is expressed as a readiness to give to another in desiring their good. The two operate together in a cyclical manner as appreciation leads to benevolence as concern for the good of the other, which, once attained, is the cause of more appreciation leading to further benevolence. See Frederick E. Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas," *Theological Studies* 20 (1959).
This recurrent pattern constitutes the wonderful feeling of the lover as fulfilment of an elemental drive to find meaning and satisfaction in love that creates happiness in another. Sebastian Moore describes this "universal human need in its fully adult form" as "the need to be myself for another", where the word 'for' refers both to my attraction to the other and to the other's attraction to me. When one's being has become a dynamic state of being-in-love with God, one's relationship to everything and everyone else is transformed.  See Sebastian Moore, *The Fire and the Rose Are One* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1980). 11.

[86] *Method,*105.

Religious experience, therefore, is the experience of being in love with God as the fulfilment of subjectivity. It involves self-transcendence, in which there is self-surrender without the loss of self, through a being-in-love without limits or qualifications. Lonergan comments:

> That fulfilment is not the product of our knowledge and choice. On the contrary it dismantles and abolishes the horizon in which our knowing and choosing went on and it sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing.[87]

This description of loving response to the love of God, as producing radical change in who or what we live for, is of the experience of religious conversion. At the level of theory, this experience has been reflected upon in Christian theology in understandings of the operation of the grace of God in the human soul. As experienced, it is a dynamic state of being-in-love in which religiously converted subjects are motivated to freely and prayerfully make responsible and loving decisions about values and courses of action in a context of being motivated by the limitless love of God.

Accounts of religious experience may be found in all cultures, their many forms of expression being influenced greatly by the stage of meaning operative in a given culture.

Common themes may be discerned in the forms of expression found in major world religions and, Lonergan contends, are "implicit in the experience of being in love in an unrestricted manner."[88]

While the dynamic state of being in love with God is the fulfilment of human self-transcendence, it has to be recognised that human self-transcendence is uncertain in that it

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[87] *Method,* 106.
[88] *Method,* 109. In footnote 8, Lonergan cites Freidrich Heiler as providing evidence for this claim.

depends on the authenticity of the subject in responding to the transcendental precepts. It is a very considerable demand, even for those delighting in the state of being in love with God, to be consistently attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving. Absolute authenticity would require complete withdrawal from any unauthenticity on every level of consciousness. The human impossibility of its attainment leads to a tension between the self as transcending and the self as transcended. As Lonergan states;

> Of itself, self-transcendence involves tension between the self as transcending and the self as transcended. So that human authenticity is never some secure and serene possession. It is ever a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and every successful withdrawal only brings to light the need for further withdrawals.[89]

Human subjects and communities are always in process toward some goal. Religious development is dialectical inasmuch as the results of the struggle between authenticity and unauthenticity become evident in the life of individuals and the history of communities. The eventual consequences of the struggle between authenticity and unauthenticity can result in the expression of religious convictions being extremely inspiring or dire and dangerous. If the central religious focus of love becomes displaced by one that is based on being in awe of God as totally 'other' and demanding complete obedience, a 'rationalization' can be provided for evil.

> Unless religion is totally directed to what is good, to genuine love of neighbor and to a self-denial that is subordinated to a fuller goodness in oneself, then the cult of a God that is terrifying can slip over into the demonic, into an exultant destructiveness of oneself and of others.[90]

Religion enters the world mediated by meaning and value through its 'word'. Lonergan defines 'word' in this context as any expression of religious meaning or value through any carrier of meaning or value. The spoken and written word provides the most articulate

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[89] *Method,* 110.
[90] *Method,* 111.

meaning (though not necessarily the most persuasive)[91] and becomes the most important in the development of a religion.  Prior to the objectification of the outer word of religion, there is the immediacy of the experience of being-in-love with God.  Objectification of the experience through an outer word is constitutive for the subject and a community in that its expression gives rise to a new situation or dimension of meaning with all its implications for appreciating what is congruent with gift of God's love.  The word is not only personal but social and historical and it finds different expression in different stages and realms of meaning, as previously explained above.[92]  The origin of religious expression is to be found in religious experience and, as Lonergan states,

> that pertains to the realm of transcendence. Its foundations, its basic terms and relationships, its method are derived from the realm of interiority.  Its technical unfolding is in the realm of theory.  Its preaching and teaching are in the realm of common sense.[93]

The most pressing need for theology is the development of a foundation of both theory and common sense in interiority that would enable communication of the experience of the transcendent to the world mediated by meaning within a culture.

Because God's gift of love is prior to the outer word in which it is given expression, faith is to be understood as "the knowledge that is born of religious love."[94]  Here, Lonergan is speaking of faith as having its origin in the gift of God's love, at the level of transcendence. Love is the presupposition of faith.  It is prior to the doctrines and theoretical or common sense understandings in which faith is articulated as a word.  Love is the way that we come to know transcendent value and faith is the appreciation of such transcendent worth.

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[91] Depending on the differentiation of consciousness, it may well be that art or music or some other carrier of meaning that evokes feeling, particularly meaning incarnated in a person, will be much more persuasive than spoken or written words.

[92] See the last part of the previous sub-section 4.8.4.above.

[93] *Method,* 114.

[94] *Method,* 115.

The experience of being-in-love in an unrestricted manner raises the question of God in a new way, as a matter of decision. Love without restrictions can only be the love of someone who is unrestricted or transcendent. To know, as a result of this love, life as meaningful and good is to know its transcendent source as the origin of all meaning and value. Faith involves an affirmative response to the source of the gift of being-in-love so that subjectivity becomes oriented to the mystery of the source and goal of that love. On such a perspective, Lonergan comments that;

> To conceive God as originating value and the world as terminal value implies that God too is self-transcending and that the world is the fruit of his self-transcendence, the expression and manifestation of his benevolence and beneficence, his glory. As the excellence of the son is the glory of his father, so too the excellence of mankind is the glory of God. To say that God created the world for his glory is to say that he created it not for his sake but for ours. He made us in his image, for our authenticity consists in being like him, in self-transcending, in being origins of value, in true love.[95]

Faith, therefore, is the prior evaluation that discerns and welcomes God as the transcendent reality who is absolute intelligence, truth, goodness and love. Lonergan describes it as "the eye of love" without which "the world is too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist."[96] Without faith that discerns the unrestricted nature of the love of God, the possibilities of unaided human freedom are severely limited.

If all reference to the transcendent is cut off as meaningless or wish-fulfilment, human consciousness is restricted to its own self-understanding and the good intended is limited to the best that can be achieved with human resources and good will.[97] To be fulfilled, or fully human, is to allow the unrestricted desire for self-transcendence to come to its full expression. With 'the eye of love' other transcendent possibilities are discerned that are not

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[95] *Method,* 116-7.
[96] *Method,* 117.
[97] In *Insight*, Lonergan described such a standpoint as resting on "man's proud content to be just a man, and its tragedy is that …. to be just a man is what man cannot be. .. if he would be only a man, he has to be less." *Insight,* 750.

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bounded by the human horizon. Faith perceives in love a purpose to life beyond being practical and efficient or achieving the satisfaction of immediate personal or group self-interest. The human good becomes part of an all-encompassing good. Faith becomes the ground of hope and religious belief that enables resistance of evil and the reversal of decline and decay.

In chapter two on 'The Human Good', Lonergan drew attention to knowing by belief as accounting for most of our knowledge, and how it results from judgments of value that are intelligent, reasonable and responsible. Religious belief has the same structure as all other knowledge acquired by belief. It differs in its basis because it is dependent on faith. In Lonergan's own words: "Among the values that faith discerns is the value of believing the word of religion, of accepting the judgments of fact and the judgments of value that the religion proposes."[98]

Religious belief, therefore, is the acceptance of words, concepts and symbols as expressions of faith that satisfy understanding and correspond with experience. It relates individuals to a community of believers, for many before have loved the God with whom one is in love. "Believing, in the real sense, is learning from others what they have found out about the love of God."[99] There is an essential intersubjective dimension to the dynamism from above of unrestricted love that issues in religious belief.

Forms of expression of religious understanding create an outer word that enters the world of meaning and value. Such an outer word has a necessary constitutive function. It

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[98] *Method,* 118.
[99] Hefling, *Why Doctrines?* 30.

constitutes the tradition of a people as a community of believers that is expressed in signs, symbols and words.  The accumulated religious wisdom of the group is expressed socially and historically so that individuals may discover forms of expression that enable identification of the source of their being-in-love.  The human response to the divine initiative is also the continuing story of God's love as operative in the community of believers.  In so far as the response is authentic, God's self-communication enters the world of religious expression.  "Then not only the inner word that is God's gift of his love but also the outer word of the religious tradition comes from God."[100]

The distinction that Lonergan makes between faith and religious belief rests on the distinction of four realms of meaning.  Whereas the realms of common sense and theory are commonly recognised (and, in theology, a realm of transcendence), it is an understanding of the realm of interiority that is Lonergan's distinctive contribution to the question of theological method.  Reference to inner experience, or religious experience of the love of God, has usually been in the realm of common sense, and theoretical explanations have seemed remote or abstruse, resulting in a consequent distaste for 'academic' theology.[101] Through self-appropriation or intellectual conversion that enables understanding of the

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[100] *Method,* 119.

[101] For example, in a popular evangelical work, Philip Yancey describes theoretical approaches to grace as being like a dissection. "I have just read a thirteen page treatise on grace in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, which has cured me of any desire to dissect grace and display its innards. I do not want the thing to die. For this reason, I will rely more on stories than on syllogisms." Philip J Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997). 16.
While Yancey is concerned about communication at the level of common sense, there also exists a role for theory in achieving precision in understanding. As Lonergan states, "When expression is confined to the realm of common sense, it can succeed only by drawing upon the power of symbols and figures to suggest or evoke what cannot be adequately said. When the realm of theory becomes explicit, religion may take advantage of it to bring about a clearer and firmer delineation of itself, its objectives and its aims." *Method,*114. The tension and contrast between common sense and theory leads to the God of Abraham, Moses, the prophets and Jesus Christ being set against the God of philosophers and theologians. The tension can only be resolved in the realm of interiority. It is a lack of differentiated consciousness that leads to fears that 'the thing (will) die'.

realm of interiority, the experience of human relationships of love and trust may be understood as analogous to faith. They form the experiential ground that is sublated and transformed by religious conversion into a transfiguring relationship with God. Ordinarily knowledge precedes love, in that operations on the fourth level of intentional consciousness presuppose and complement those at the first three levels of experience, understanding and judging. In human relationships the experience of falling in love is disproportionate to its causes or conditions and involves the exercise of vertical liberty in which one's world undergoes reorganization. The experience of the awareness of being unconditionally loved by God issues in a dynamic state of being in love in which we know ourselves as human subjects relating to God, the infinite source of understanding and love beyond all human understanding.

> Our love reveals to us values that we had not appreciated, values of prayer and worship, or repentance and belief. But if we would know what is going on within us, if we would learn to integrate it with the rest of our living, we have to inquire, investigate, seek counsel. So it is that in religious matters love precedes knowledge and, as that love is God's gift, the very beginning of faith is due to God's grace.[102]

It is because of the recognition that there is a realm where love precedes knowledge that Lonergan is able to make a distinction between faith and religious belief. The relation of faith and religious belief is established through acknowledgment that in religious beliefs we profess the 'light of faith' that grounds our belief. As he recognised, such an approach facilitates ecumenical dialogue and enables the theologian to address the basic aim set forth in the first sentence of the book and with which this outline of Lonergan's approach began.

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[102] *Method,* 122-3.

"A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix".[103]

## 4.8.6 The necessary prolegomenon to Method in Theology

The first four chapters of *Method* establish the vital connection between theology and human living, both as an individual human subject and as related to a community within a particular culture.

In summary, the first chapter on 'Method' addresses the question of what is involved in 'mediating' and demonstrates that mediation is through the human subject. An invariant normative pattern of subjective operations constitutes the dynamism of consciousness inherent in the human subject that intends self-transcendence. Objectification of the normative pattern of operations is the basis for the formulation of transcendental method. It becomes, from the purely human perspective, "a rock on which one can build", a foundation based on that which spontaneously operates in all human subjects.[104]

The second chapter on 'The Human Good' discusses the principles that constitute a 'cultural matrix', within which the life of every human subject takes place. A culture exists to promote cooperation toward the human good and provides a context in which theology mediates religious meaning and value.

The third chapter on 'Meaning' attends to the question of 'the role and significance' of a religion within a cultural matrix, recognising the basic need for forms of religious expression to carry meaning and make sense to those addressed. 'Meaning' is a very 'thick' word and its elucidation - through consideration of sources, acts and terms,

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[103] *Method,* xi.
[104] *Method,* 19.

functions, and realms and stages of meaning - demonstrates the need for differentiation of consciousness that distinguishes what is 'meant' in a given context. In particular, the distinction of four functions of meaning as cognitive (concerned with objective reality), constitutive (meaning as forming identity), communicative (meaning as forming community), and effective (meaning as world forming) allows for a richly nuanced approach to questions of transmission of meaning.

The fourth chapter on 'Religion' addresses the question of the content of faith and religious belief that theology is called to mediate in a particular cultural context. Lonergan sees the human relation to God through the gift of God's love as the fulfilment of human conscious intentionality, as understood from the perspective of interiority, and he names it as a state of 'being-in-love with God'. That experience is the prior reality that has been objectified in theoretical categories such as 'sanctifying grace'. Objectification of the prior reality of being in love with God is necessary, in that the outer word of religious belief constitutes the tradition of a community of believers and human life is not intended to be solitary but communal.

From the basis that religious experience of being in love with God is understood as the complete fulfilment of the desires of the human heart and mind, Lonergan arrives at the core of theological method in the formulation of 'functional specialties'. They specify the various tasks involved in the implementation of transcendental method as a "normative pattern of related and recurrent operations that yield progressive and cumulative results."[105]

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[105] *Method,* 4.

## 4.9  Functional Specialization

Specialization in theology may result from divisions and subdivisions within the field of relevant data to be studied, or through the division and classification of the results of such investigations.  Field specialization within biblical studies, for example, may be in a sub-set of the data that comprise the Old or New Testaments, whereas the history or theology of the Old or New Testaments (and their many sub-sets) are subject specializations that consider the results of studies of relevant data.  The functional specialization Lonergan proposes is a third type, that "distinguishes and separates successive stages in the process from data to results."[106]  For example, New Testament study can be undertaken through a series of stages, from textual criticism, to interpretation, to history of interpretations, to theology of the text and its communication.  Functional specializations are related to one another in that they are successive and cumulative, each depending upon and adding to results achieved in prior specialties.  They are also functionally independent in that each specialty has its own criteria, objectives, and limitations.

Lonergan proposes that there are eight distinct functional specializations in theology.  They are based on the structure of four levels of conscious intentionality, which has to be duplicated because "theological operations occur in two basic phases.  If one is to harken to the word, one has also to bear witness to it."[107]  The first four specialties of 'harkening to the word' are termed (1) research, (2) interpretation, (3) history and (4) dialectic.  They are concerned with appropriating the past and apprehending relevant and reliable data, its history of interpretation and the crucial basic issues that have appeared and call for

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[106] *Method,* 126.
[107] *Method,* 133.

decision.  In the second phase of 'bearing witness' to the word, the specialties are (5) foundations, (6) doctrines, (7) systematics and (8) communications.  These are concerned with how conversion in the theologian provides a basis for reflection on faith, identification of the religious truths and values held by people of faith, understanding such truths and values as a coherent whole, and communicating and promoting necessary change, as on-going conversion, that religious truths and values indicate may be required.

The table on the following page illustrates the relationship of the functional specialties to the structure of conscious intentionality.  It is based on transcendental method as a generic structure operating through four levels to arrive at immanently generated knowledge of fact and value and the evaluation, affirmation and understanding of knowledge acquired through belief.  In elementary outline, it represents the functional relations involved in the fulfilment of the desires of the human mind and heart.

# LONERGAN'S FUNCTIONAL SPECIALTIES:[108]

**Conversion**
religious          (objectified)
moral
intellectual

| Dialectic | Deciding | Foundations |
|---|---|---|
| History | Judging | Doctrines |
| Interpretation | Understanding | Systematics |
| Research | Experiencing | Communications |

FROM DATA                                                    TO RESULTS

| Listening | Human Subject | Speaking |
|---|---|---|
| Mediating theology | | Mediated theology |
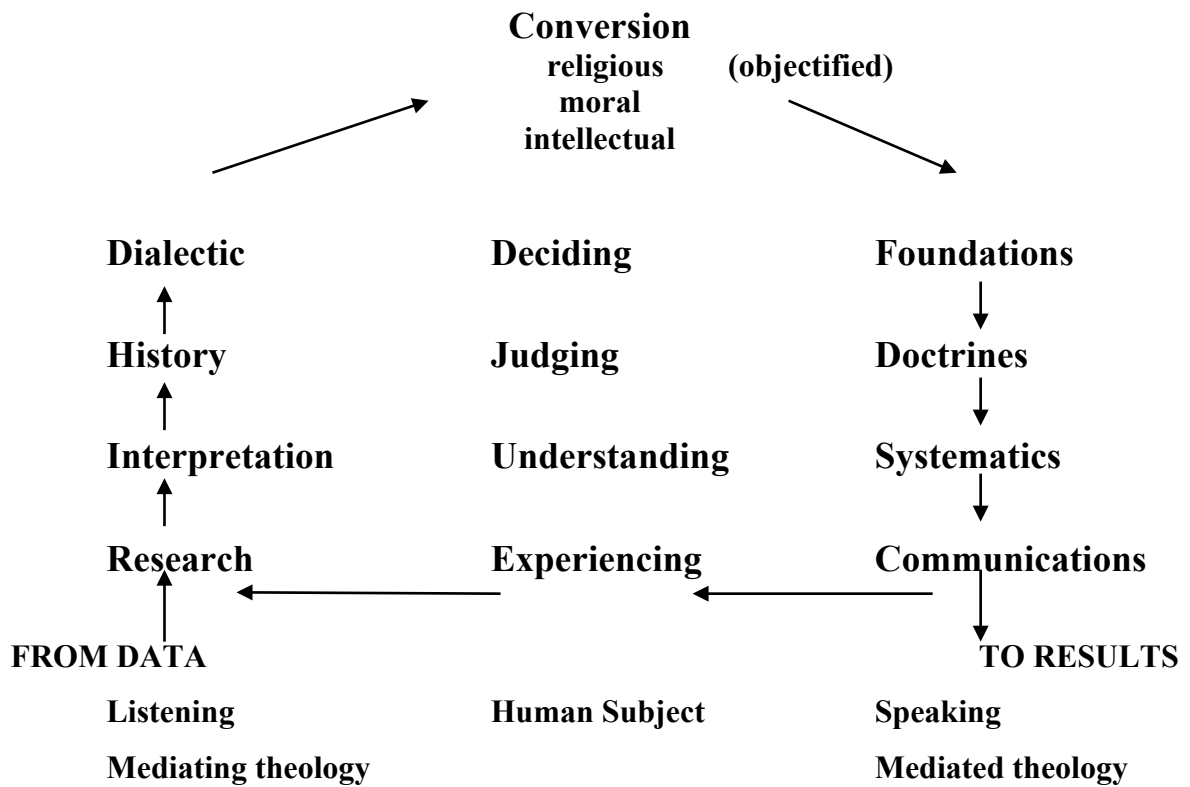
*The momentum indicated by arrows is the spontaneous recurrent inner movement of conscious intentionality that enables inquiry, understanding, knowledge, decision and action.*
*The conversions are not part of the theological structure as such but are essential to its proper functioning as will be explained below.*

In first phase of theology the ascending drive toward cognitional and moral self-transcendence begins at the first level of experiencing with the apprehension and assembly of data. All inquiry is the posing of a question that seeks understanding of a concrete field of data. Research involves assessment of the relevance and reliability of data to a particular theological inquiry and usually will consist of texts. On the second level, interpretation is the process of inquiry that seeks understanding through the grasp of meaning in the apprehended data and involves principles of exegesis and hermeneutics. On the third level

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[108] This table was drawn for teaching purposes by Dr Kathleen Williams RSM.

of judgment, inquiry aims to assess and reach conclusions about hypotheses and theories that have been put forward in history to account for the data. Concentration is on the patterns, institutions and dynamics of development and the emergence of new understandings and expressions of faith over time. On the fourth level of deliberation, evaluation, and decision, the concern of inquiry in dialectic is for discernment and responsible decision-making through evaluation of the significance of conclusions reached in the first three levels of inquiry. The sources of, and reasons for, conflicts of understanding are analysed and assessments made as to whether they are irreducible or capable of resolution through inclusion in a higher viewpoint or as representing different stages of one development. The intended goal is a general or comprehensive viewpoint that, for one individual, is only possible over a limited range of data. Collaboration is as essential in theology as any in other discipline when tackling large questions.

In this first mediating phase of theology, theologians are invited to widen their horizons to consider all relevant data as completely as possible. The past is mediated to the theologian in assembling data, considering meanings, developments, and conflicts of understanding and their possible resolution. A point of decision is arrived at regarding differences and conflicts and in making such decisions, as a result of deliberation and evaluation, the theologian is personally involved. The dynamism of movement to this point is that associated with transcendental method based on the normative pattern that relates and directs the recurrent operations of intentional consciousness. Immanently generated knowledge of fact and value is through an ascent from first level experience to second level understanding, to third level judgment and knowledge of fact (cognitional self-

transcendence), and to fourth level deliberation, evaluation and decision and judgments of value that intend and involve moral self-transcendence.

It will be noted that theological sources are initially treated as 'data'. This is because the focus is on method and it is not a methodological task to specify the status of source data. That is the occupation of theologians engaged in assessments of the value and relevance of data when engaged in general or special research. For Lonergan, "when one adopts a strictly methodological viewpoint, the emphasis shifts from objects to operations and operators …. both the transcendental and the methodological turn require that the realities of the subject be primary and basic".[109] The specifically theological principle at the heart of theological method, therefore, is simply the reality of the transformation brought about by the on-going process of religious, moral and intellectual conversion in the theologian. That reality becomes central for method rather than notional understandings of religious truths or how religious conversion has been, or is to be, understood and expressed. Lonergan's insistence that the foundations of theology reside in the minds and hearts of theologians and that attention must be given to understanding what happens in minds and hearts has to be regarded as his fundamental contribution to the process of theological inquiry.

Theologians may be more or less converted, intellectually, morally and religiously and the extent of conversion directly affects their 'horizon' of interests and concerns, of the assumptions made, the questions to be considered, and so forth. The conversions are relevant to any retrieval of the past because there are many conflicting accounts and

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[109] Bernard Lonergan, "Bernard Lonergan Responds," in *Foundations of Theology; Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970.*, ed. Philip McShane (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1971). 224, 226.

interpretations of texts and developments that arise from opposing views about knowing, value systems, history, and religion or faith. Conversion does not prescribe particular rules for research, interpretation, history and dialectic and, in principle Lonergan states, "the same methodical precepts are to be acceptable to believers and agnostics alike" but "they will not attain the same results".[110] This is because the results of any inquiry are unavoidably influenced by the previous development of one's understanding. A determined effort is required for any theological inquiry to be characterized as open and attentive to the possibility of biases or blind spots and by a willingness to learn from others with whom we may disagree.

The issues that arise in dialectic as a functional speciality, therefore, call for evaluation and decision on the fourth level of conscious intentionality and the fifth speciality 'Foundations' also seeks the end proper to deciding. It begins the second phase of theological method at the point where a decision has been made "that selects one horizon and rejects others. The horizons in question are determined by the conflicts revealed in dialectic."[111] It articulates the standpoint of conversion as an on-going process and reflects on its requirements as critically appropriated in the light of history and dialectic. It thus provides "the horizon within which religious doctrines can be or cannot be apprehended".[112] In this second phase of method, the dynamism of conscious intentionality may be understood as descending from the fourth level to the first three levels of judgment, understanding and experience in the specialties 'doctrines', 'systematics', and 'communications'. This parallels the dynamism involved in knowledge acquired by belief,

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[110] Lonergan, "Lonergan Responds." 227.
[111] ———, "Lonergan Responds." 230
[112] *Method,* 131.

from 'above' to 'below' as previously described in the consideration of the chapter on 'The Human Good'.[113]   Foundations, therefore, marks a shift from the indirect discourse of appropriating the past to the direct discourse of what now has to be said toward the future as a result of decisions made on basic standpoints.

Doctrines as the sixth specialty in Lonergan's view, "express judgments of fact and judgments of value. … They have their precise definition from dialectic, their positive wealth of clarification and development from history, their grounds in the interpretation of the data proper to theology."[114]  They are, therefore, formulations that objectify the content of the standpoints taken in foundations.  The significant movement from indirect discourse to the particular stance of a theologian as self-involved is objectified in the identification of doctrines to which she is committed.  In being concerned with judgments of fact and value, doctrines are not only a matter of dogmatic theology but also relate to moral, pastoral and other branches of theology.  The seventh speciality, systematics, addresses questions arising from doctrines and seeks to provide understanding of the realities affirmed as a coherent whole in relation to all else that is experienced and known.  Communications is concerned with the external relations of theology by producing data (possible experience) in the present for the future.  The 'descent' from foundations to communications is regarded by Lonergan as, "not properly a deduction, but rather a successive series of transpositions to ever more determinate contexts."[115]  The dynamism of method is not only serially linked in one direction, from foundations to doctrines to systematics and communication, but also linked in reverse because communication raises questions for

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[113] See 4.8.3 pp 179-188 above.
[114] *Method,* 132.
[115] *Method,* 142.

systematics, systematics for doctrines, and doctrines for foundations. Further, the two phases of theology are regarded as interdependent and Lonergan warns against the second phase interfering with the proper functioning of the first. It would then be "cutting itself off from its own proper source and ground and blocking the way to its own vital development."[116] The functional specialties thus provide a theological method that is 'a framework for collaborative creativity' through the interaction of theologians engaged in different specialties. Method is not a matter of eight stages to be successively completed and interaction is not primarily a matter of logic but of theologians being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, and religious as the commitment of being in love with God. It is not a set of rules but a process by which theologians can achieve fruitful interaction and dialogue with other disciplines and thus "mediate between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion within that matrix."[117]

The specialties do to some extent parallel field or subject divisions of theology, but the distinctive relevance of the functional specialties is that they are defined as a series of tasks in a single process from data to results. This enables a unified view of theology as a whole. Often such a view is missing, with the result that specialists experience difficulties in communicating with specialists in other fields or subjects. Effective communication and collaboration is made possible through concentration on the method or process involved in reaching results within each specialty. In each functional specialty there will be research, interpretation, history, dialectic, a foundational stand, principles established, articulated and related to other understanding and then communicated.

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[116] *Method,* 143.
[117] *Method,* xi.

While theologians may focus on one specialization or a combination of several, it is important for a theologian to identify which functions are being undertaken.[118] The division into functional specialties can also assist in preventing one specialty being regarded as more important than another and minimises the problems of distortion that occur when the importance of other specialties is overlooked.

The functional specialties form a dynamic unity that is not fixed and static but an on-going developing process. Where there is development there can also be decline as the history of theology, as of humankind, makes very clear. Initially faith and theology were not distinguished. It was only as questions arose, in apologetic or teaching situations, requiring answers within a larger framework of understanding that the development of theology took place. Academic theology is, and always has been, irrelevant to those whose consciousness is undifferentiated. Theology is required to address questions arising in contemporary situations on the level of the times and, for many centuries, has resulted in the distinction of faith and theology. Doing theology involves a withdrawal from the common sense realm of meaning concerned with the immediate and practical to the realms of theory and interiority. But, as Lonergan insists, "the separateness of theology is a withdrawal that always intends and in its ultimate stage effects a return."[119] Doing theology, therefore, is always for the sake of an eventual integration into human living and method as functional specialization

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[118] This thesis, for example, is concerned with the foundational requirements involved in a theologian's engagement in the task of theology. It has drawn on interpretation, history, and dialectic, and intends communication about the reasons for, and importance and consequences of, recognising that the foundations of theology are in the theologian rather than in truths or doctrines as propositions or objects of knowledge. While it is concerned with the functional specialty 'Foundations', it is an exercise in communication of the implications of foundations being in the subject for the theologian, both in its major form as the authenticity of a tradition and minor form of personal authenticity.

[119] *Method,* 140.

specifically intends such a result. Any such 'return' to communication and an eventual transposition into practical and common sense implications for human living has to be an engagement in contemporary terms. Religious and theological development may be understood as correlating with other forms of cultural development, and co-operating with other attempts to reverse decline, as it articulates the requirements of a potentially transformative dimension of the unity of consciousness that is human life.

Through the gift of God's love and decisions to live authentically, namely in a positive response to the transcendental precepts to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and 'in love', the human good (including good theology) is made concrete collaboratively, meaning is conveyed and the origin of theology as reflection on faith that results from religious conversion is affirmed.

### *4.10 From Approach to Implementation of Method*
### 4.10.1 Introduction

The chapters comprising Part Two of *Method* are dedicated to further explanation of each of the eight functional specialties. It is not necessary to comment on each functional specialty as the major concern of this work is to outline Lonergan's approach to theological method as a whole and, in particular, the role of the theologian. Concentration, therefore, has been on the reasons for Lonergan arriving at a methodology in which theology is conceived as reflection on religion through functional specialties. Two phases are involved in which attention is focussed on learning from an accurate appropriation of the past culminating in establishing foundations that form the basis of theological understanding directed to the present situation. The functional specialty 'Foundations', therefore, is central in regard to the role of the theologian, and, therefore, for this thesis.

## 4.10.2 'Foundations' and the relation of conversion to theological method

Foundations is concerned with that most significant theological movement in which a theologian moves from assent to truth to the personal affirmation of what is true. This process of decision-making is initiated on the fourth level of consciousness where dialectic completes the first phase of understanding in coming to judgments regarding opposing viewpoints. The resolution arrived at is the 'hinge' by which dialectics becomes foundations as the basis of the second phase of method. In response to the past, the theologian takes a stand in the present with regard to the future. Foundational reality, therefore, is in the theologian's decisions regarding judgments of fact and judgments of value with regard to that which is truly good as the response to ongoing religious, moral and intellectual conversion.

While conversions may occur in any order, Lonergan suggests that the typical pattern of development is one of "intellectual conversion as the fruit of both religious and moral conversion; … moral conversion as the fruit of religious conversion; and ... religious conversion as the fruit of God's grace."[120] Conversion is foundational to a theologian as the response to such basic questions as, "On what, and where and when, do I take a stand?" and "To what, or whom, do I bow down?"

This approach to theological foundations differs markedly from the usual conception of "foundations as a set of premises, of logically first propositions."[121] An understanding of foundations being expressed in formulations results in foundations becoming cognitive and deductive, intrinsically ideological. In Lonergan's understanding, theological method is

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[120] *Method,* 267/8
[121] *Method,* 269

concerned with a process from data to results that requires the relocation of foundations from propositions to the foundational reality of conversion in the theologian.

> For the method to be a method in theology it must implement a specifically theological principle, and the principle selected has been religious conversion. It is not the methodologist's views on conversion … but conversion itself in its spontaneous consequences that exerts an influence on the results of research, interpretation, history and dialectic.[122]

Foundations, therefore, are in the personal decisions and commitments that form the basic stance of faith and are prior to the formulation of propositions. They are not located in logically first propositions because faith is not the result of assent to logically consistent propositions but "the knowledge born of religious love", as Lonergan maintained in his chapter on 'Religion', citing Pascal's dictum that the heart has reasons that reason does not know.

Conversion is not a prerequisite for engaging in the functional specialties of the first mediating phase of theology. While the influence of conversion in a theologian will be implicit, conversion "does not constitute an explicit, established, universally recognised criterion of proper procedure in these specialties."[123] The deliberations of dialectic reveal basic conflicts and oppositions but dialectic does not take a stance. Only a human subject makes decisions. As they are made, dialectic is transformed into foundations. Foundations, therefore, is concerned with such decisions and has affinity with dialectic as both operate on the fourth level of conscious intentionality. In the second phase of method, therefore, religious and moral conversion is required and intellectual conversion is most desirable.

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[122] Lonergan, "Lonergan Responds." 232.
[123] *Method,* 268.

In the functional specialty 'Foundations', therefore, a theologian reflects on the implications that follow from conversion as a basic personal stance. This normally will be made in the wider context of a tradition. As personal, it is reflection on one's developing identity as a result of conversion but occurs within the communal identity of a tradition, which is also situated in wider contexts of culture and history. 'Foundations' forms a new 'horizon', which is the term used by Lonergan to describe the extent of a person's interests and knowledge and constitutes their 'world' of meaning and value, "in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective."[124]

Foundational decisions are always the result of deliberation and evaluation. They cannot be arbitrary. For Lonergan, "arbitrariness is just unauthenticity, while conversion is from unauthenticity to authenticity. It is total surrender to the demands of the human spirit: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love."[125] Neither are foundational decisions to be explained by voluntarism, as though they are acts of will that supersede the operation of the intellect in matters of religion or morality. That is to sever 'will' from the operation of the intellect, which, in Lonergan's understanding, is incorrect and impossible. It is self-knowledge of oneself as a knower that enables intentionality analysis in which judgments of fact and value are related as successive levels of consciousness. 'Willingness' to decide and act responsibly is understood as operating on the fourth level, where values are apprehended and consciousness becomes conscience. Religious conversion adds the motivating experience of being in love with God in response

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[124] *Method,* 268.
[125] *Method*, 268. This is the only time that Lonergan adds the fifth precept, 'be in love', presumably because of the present context.

to the gift of God's love as the fulfilment of our desire for unrestricted loving relation. Of course, human beings are also open to the possibility of being unwilling to act in accord with an informed conscience, or of being unwilling to be informed, and to engage in biased decision-making and irresponsible action. Sometimes, this is ruefully recognised later as irresponsible and 'against our better judgment'.

As Lonergan acknowledges, "deliberate decision about one's horizon is high achievement."[126] Commonly, a foundational stance is not deliberately chosen but gradually assumed through socialization, or drifting, into the values, interests and concerns of family, friends and the circles frequented within wider society, with little or no reflection.

'Foundations', therefore, are in the person of a theologian. It refers to the reality of conversion and the consequential basic personal stance taken by a theologian and identifiable in positions taken and decisions made. Lonergan concludes that

> it (conversion) occurs only inasmuch as a man discovers what is unauthentic in himself and turns away from it, inasmuch as he discovers what the fullness of human authenticity can be and embraces it with his whole being. It is something very cognate to the Christian gospel, which cries out: Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand.[127]

### 4.10.3 Authenticity and Conversion

Lonergan gives a precise meaning to both 'authenticity' and 'conversion'. Authenticity is identified with complete fidelity to the transcendental precepts as the normative demands of intentional consciousness and is the basis of sustained development. It is never a possession, because it refers to the concrete and continual process of withdrawal from constantly arising temptations to unauthenticity. The human condition, both individually

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[126] *Method,* 69.
[127] *Method,* 271.

and collectively, is understood to be such that complete authenticity is unachievable through our own unaided efforts.

Religious conversion refers to the response of love to the unrestricted love and goodness of God as fulfilment of the human longing for absolute fulfilment. It requires our full co-operation expressed in decisions and actions. As a healing and restorative state of being in love, conversion increases the possibility of authenticity by motivating decisions and actions that are both genuinely autonomous and dependent on the grace of God. Anthropology and theology intersect and merge. Authenticity is the full expression of autonomy as it is intended to be. It refers to concretely deciding and acting in accordance with the norms and goals (*nomos*) of the self (*autos*), or the desires of the human mind and heart that intend complete fulfilment in ultimate self-transcending love. Through conversion and faith, "the eye of love", it is recognised "that God grants men their freedom, that he wills them to be persons and not just automata, that he calls them to the higher authenticity that overcomes evil with good."[128]

For the Christian, of course, the complete expression of authentic human life is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, itself understood as the gift of God's love. Further comment on the last phrase would involve going beyond foundations to the following functional specialty of doctrines. It may simply be noted that the foundations of the self-identity of the Church (and, therefore, Christian theology) is established and preserved through the 'event' of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, something that actually took place in human history. No Church doctrine or theological teaching can ever

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[128] *Method,* 117.

be as ultimate as the person of Jesus Christ. They do not constitute foundations because foundations refers to the reality of conversion as a fully human response enabled by the gift of God's grace.

As authenticity is a constant withdrawal from unauthenticity, so conversion is an on-going process. Theologians are involved in on-going conversations but also in on-going conversion of who they are and are becoming, as a result of that which they judge to be of ultimate value.

### 4.10.4 Pluralism of expression in language about faith and religion

Since 'foundations' arise from a theologian's conscious and deliberate decisions that form an horizon or worldview, there is an inevitable pluralism of expression in language about faith and religion.

Pluralism results from differences of experience, of prior understandings, and of realms of meaning entered. Differentiation of consciousness that enables the distinguishing of the main realms of common sense, theory, interiority and transcendence makes it possible to account for such pluralism. There are specializations, such as scholarship and art, mentioned by Lonergan that become realms of meaning differentiated from common sense through development of particular methods of approach to data, with their own distinctive terminology and social or professional culture. It would appear that he has the functional specialties, interpretation, history and dialectic particularly in mind in regard to 'scholarship'. Such scholarly differentiation is regarded as literary in that it intends the grasp of meaning of texts or events and is a specialization of common sense applied to the common sense of another time and/or culture. While they may be understood to develop theories of interpretation, they are to be distinguished from the realm of theory, which goes

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beyond what may be sensed or imagined to the realm of pure intelligibility - of things in themselves and in relation to one another, and not in relation to us.

Assuming that all adults operate in one of the many varieties of common sense, there are many possible combinations of differentiated consciousness operating in the theologian. They result in the many different ways of expressing an understanding of the meaning of experience, hence the difficulties encountered in understanding scholarly and theoretical forms of expression. The realm of interiority, drawing on the data of consciousness to understand acts of understanding implicit in other realms of meaning, provides a potential unifying ground amidst the pluralism of expression.

Common sense refers to the realm of common meaning that applies in the many aspects of daily life. It is aware of other realms of meaning but its apprehension of them is vague and imprecise. It is, therefore, undifferentiated with regard to theory (or any specialized form of academic discourse), interiority, and transcendence. Since the consciousness of the majority of the religiously converted is undifferentiated, theology as interpretation, history and dialectic, or doctrines and systematics, is beyond their horizon and regarded with puzzlement and, often, defensively and negatively.[129] Only if differentiated theological insights are communicated within appropriate modes of common sense is a public language made possible for theology. The many varieties of common sense mean that many variations of forms of expression are required for such insights to be effectively communicated.

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[129] Lonergan refers to a "self-defence" that regards "the more differentiated with that pervasive, belittling hostility that Max Scheler named *ressentiment.*" *Method,* 273.

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The experience of being in love with God is experience of love that is unconditional and transcendent and beyond human knowing. Questions about understanding simply do not occur in the midst of such experience. There are mystical approaches to theology that discourage questioning and remain content with negative statements about unknowing that often are accompanied by a highly developed artistic differentiation of consciousness expressed in the beauty of liturgy, music and oratory. The history of theology also indicates that questions continue to occur about the meaning of religious experience and the forms of expression used to objectify it. Many questions require answers that provide clarification of the meaning of doctrines. In such questioning is the beginning of the movement from common sense to theory. This became evident in the early history of the Church, in questions that resulted in various answers that brought about the Christological and Trinitarian controversies. There was a movement from the directness of experience, faith and scripture to the question of relating faith to reason as then understood. Differentiation of consciousness became necessary, not to indulge in theological speculation for its own sake, but to support faith and save it from lapsing into error that, unchecked, would vitiate its life. Later, scholastic theology sought to "logically reconcile all the elements in its Christian inheritance" but it "did not realize how much of the multiplicity in the inheritance constituted not a logical or metaphysical problem but basically a historical problem."[130] The present need is for theology to clarify its approach through interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness that makes transcendental method specific to theology as its basic anthropological component. That would not be a new resource for theology (it has always been the product of human minds) but would lead

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[130] *Method,* 279-80

to a greater awareness about what is involved in doing theology, with the aim of achieving greater precision of expression and capacity for relevant application in the contemporary situation.

### 4.10.5 Categories

Contemporary theology that is open to history requires a basis that is transcultural and that is found in the attending, inquiring, reflecting, deliberating human subject.  Transcendental method and the gift of God's grace are transcultural in that to which they refer, though their form of expression will always be culturally conditioned.  To engage in theology a theologian has to consider the means by which a determinant content of the meaning of data is to be reached.  The data has to be categorized in some way and Lonergan recognizes general and special theological categories, general categories being those shared with other areas of inquiry and special categories being particular to theology.  He does not develop a theory of categories because, as methodologist, his task is to describe the qualities desired of categories, justify their validity and explain how they are to be derived.

The basis of general theological categories is in the theologian operating authentically as a converted subject who is attending, inquiring, reflecting, deliberating, and self-appropriating.  The operations as operating are revelatory of the theologian while the operations reveal objects.  There is a long history of theologians being engaged in the task of seeking understanding sought by faith, as an inner word apprehended through love, and relating such understanding to that which is objectified in the community's outer word as belief.  Understanding the subjective operations of the theologian as a verifiable dynamic structure that provides a basic nest of terms and relations, Lonergan indicates a ninefold

manner in which they can be differentiated so as to enrich the initial nest of terms and relations and provide a broadened basis from which further development is possible.[131]

The basis of special theological categories is the "authentic or unauthentic Christian, genuinely in love with God or failing in that love."[132] A first set of categories is derived from religious experience, the dynamic state of being-in-love with God. It is faith that seeks understanding, not belief. The experience of unrestricted love may be objectified in historical, phenomenological, psychological, sociological studies of religious interiority. The spiritual development of the theologian is necessarily involved in this work as it is the only means of beginning to understand the religious experience of others and develop the capacity in which to adequately express it. A second set of categories regards the communal expression of commitment inspired by love and issuing in service and witness. The third set of categories is derived from love and the transcendent source of our being loved and loving without restriction, which is central to the Christian tradition. A fourth set results from differentiation of consciousness and dialectically addresses questions of moral and religious authenticity or unauthenticity. The fifth set of categories is derived from the notions of progress, decline and redemption, by regarding the question of authenticity in the doing of good and undoing of evil in the world and the Church.

Both the general and special categories are derived from the transcultural base of the authentic human subject as attending, inquiring, reflecting and deliberating. "The

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[131] Lonergan indicates that the basic nest of terms and relations can be distinguished by operation, pattern of experience, differentiation of consciousness, realm of meaning, heuristic structure, degree of control over differentiation of consciousness, degree of conversion, and results. As Lonergan goes on to indicate, the context can be further developed in the manner that the moving viewpoint of *Insight* develops from insights to the question of God. *Method,* 287/8.
[132] *Method,* 292.

derivation of the categories is a matter of the human and the Christian subject effecting self-appropriation and employing this heightened consciousness both as a basis for methodical control in doing theology and, as well, as an *a priori* " from which the social relations, history, religion, rituals, and destiny of others may be understood.[133]

In summary, foundations are not in sets of concepts, propositions or theses. Objectivity is not constituted by external criteria or standards but rather, as Lonergan affirms; "Genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity."[134] Foundations are in the operations of an authentic converted subject since it is only through such operations that affirmations about reality and ultimate value are possible. Categories are descriptions or 'models' of reality that, as sets of interlocking terms and relations, guide inquiry in doctrines, systematics and communications, but it is data that must be the determinant rather than categories. The ever present temptation to fit data into a preconceived 'model' is to be avoided. Lonergan uses the movement of a pair of scissors to describe this dynamic structure of methodical inquiry. Scissors have an upper and lower blade, both of which are necessary to the function of cutting. Categories may be likened to the upper blade of heuristic structure that provides the cut whereas data is the lower blade providing the direction for the cut.

Given that theology is an on-going process in an on-going situation of actual and potential religious development and decline, then foundations, for Lonergan, "will be concerned largely with the origins, the genesis, the present state, the possible developments and adaptations of the categories in which Christians understand themselves, communicate with

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[133] *Method,* 292.
[134] *Method,* 292.

one another, and preach the gospel to all nations."[135]   In the contemporary situation, theologians working in foundations will be concerned with the transposition of categories from the realm of theory to that of interiority and with reflection on their own critical reflections.

Foundations, understood as the objectification of the horizon effected by religious, moral and intellectual conversion, is a radical departure from the commonly held notion of foundations being set forth in a set of doctrines guaranteed by the Church and taught in Scripture.  The understanding of foundations proposed by Lonergan has its source in the prior inner word of the gift of God's love that establishes the horizon within which religious beliefs may be apprehended and the meaning of their formulation in doctrines understood.  Its grounding is in the truth of the transcendent source of Love evoking response in the human subject.  This is prior to objectified expressions of truth about God in outer words of worship or Church doctrines in that it refers to that which renders them cognitively, constitutively, and effectively meaningful.   Lonergan's concern is with methodological 'doctrine' as reflection on the operations of contemporary theologians engaged in reflection on Church doctrines, the apostolic tradition and the original Christian message.  The task of the theologian is to give contemporary expression to the cognitive, constitutive, effective, and communicative meaning of Church doctrines because every formulation of doctrine and development in the apostolic tradition has an original historical context.   Understanding their meaning and significance requires the hermeneutical approach of a first mediating phase in the functional specialties, research, interpretation,

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[135] *Method,* 293.

history and dialectic and a second mediated phase of doctrines, systematics and communications.

Systematics works towards understanding of the mysteries of faith, by means of analogy with that which may be naturally known and from the interconnection of the mysteries with one another and with ultimate human destiny. The distinction between mystery and problem is important to the issue of not making transcendent mystery a problem to be solved or of 'mystifying' real problems that occur when dealing with questions of meaning.[136]

The purpose and goal of all theology is communication. It is what theology is 'for'. Withdrawal into other realms of meaning is for the sake of return to the realm of common sense where it can make a difference in the lives of individuals, communities and cultures.

### 4.10.6 Communications

Communications is the heart of the life of the Church because, unless it is effective, each generation could be the last to relate through its common meanings, judgments, values and goals. Without the goal of communications, the various functional specialties can become their own ends, academic pursuits occupying a few and not directly related to human life. Sadly, such a perception of theology is all too prevalent.[137]

Community is the ideal basis of a society because sharing common meanings and values enables human beings to cooperate towards realization of the human good. Communities are subject to continual processes of change involving changes in meaning that, over time,

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[136] See Lonergan's discussion of "Mystery and Problem' in *Method*, 344-347.

[137] The response of common sense to theory often bears a hint of '*ressentiment*', sometimes laced with humour. The response of a popular writer on 'spirituality' to the question whether he was a theologian drew the emphatic response, "Sweet Jesus, no!" It was delivered with a wry smile and evoked widespread laughter in a large and appreciative audience.

become readily apparent to all. Change occurs in the wider context of the influence of change in a culture as well resulting from factors operating within communities. Change of meaning may occur as a result of breakdown in and through communal neglect of the necessity of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible. It may also be the fruit of a community being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in addressing rather than ignoring new questions. Meeting the need of the times may require arriving at fuller explanations, or necessary adaptations.

The meaning that communities forming the Christian church are called to communicate addresses the cognitive, constitutive, effective functions of meaning in that,

> The Christian message announces what Christians are to believe, what they are to become, what they are to do. … It is cognitive inasmuch as the message tells what is to be believed. It is constitutive inasmuch as it crystallizes the hidden inner gift of love into overt Christian fellowship. It is effective inasmuch as it directs Christian service to human history to bring about the kingdom of God." [138]

The communicative function of meaning is that of communicating the cognitive, constitutive and effective meaning of the Christian message. Insofar as it is effectively communicated, Christian community is created, and, because communication is reciprocal, a two way process, Christian community is also a process that constitutes and perfects itself. The Christian church, therefore, is "a process of self-constitution occurring within worldwide human society."[139] As such, it is a structured process that promotes the good of order within the community in order to enable the flourishing of terminal values and an out-going process existing for the benefit all humankind, not for itself. It is also a redemptive process committed to making effective the Christian message centred in the redemptive gift of God's love in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Self-sacrificial love makes

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[138] *Method,* 362.
[139] *Method,* 363.

reconciliation possible for all alienated from authentic human being by sin, and enables the reversal of ideological rationalizations destructive of authentic human community.  As the mission of the Church is carried out, so is the process of the Church's self-constitution, which becomes a fully conscious process of self-constitution "only when theology unites itself with all other relevant branches of human studies."[140]

Transcendental method, reflecting as it does the very structure of human consciousness, is the core method operating in all specific methods and thus grounds integration of human sciences and theology.  All study of human living necessarily incorporates the functional specialties of research, interpretation and history.  Insofar as there are disagreements, dialectics is required to identify their cause or basis and assess whether reconciliation of differences is possible.  Foundational stands are taken and defined as a basis or as policies (doctrines) that will need to be understood for effective planning (systematics) that will enable their implementation (communications).  The good, of course, is not simply a matter of having good or correct ideas and making pronouncements about what ought to be done.  Social concern and teaching, whether derived from the social sciences or theology, or preferably from both in collaboration, have to be working towards the practical and concrete actuation of the human good.

Theology as communications is called to promote the integration and cooperation of natural and human sciences because the human situation requires collaboration to effectively address the issues.  Theologians, therefore, must be in communication with specialists in other disciplines, as such conversation is central to a functional understanding of theology

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[140] *Method,* 364.

mediating between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix.

### *4.11 Method based on praxis rather than theory*

This chapter has discussed the conclusions about theological method reached by Lonergan in his later writings. Those conclusions are based on the relation of subjectivity and objectivity discerned in Aquinas and developed and related to a twentieth century context in *Insight*. Fundamentally, and much more importantly, they are based on *praxis*. They arise from attention to, and inquiry about, the operations of the mind of the human subject in the movement from inquiry to knowledge. The claim that Lonergan makes is that it is possible to gain access to the realm of interiority or subjectivity and reflect intelligently upon and arrive at judgments about the data of consciousness. This claim is profoundly counter-cultural as interiority is generally regarded philosophically as either inaccessible or nonexistent.

Lonergan's basic invitation, therefore, is for each person to reflect on the relevant data of consciousness as the means of arriving at self-knowledge of what, in practice, happens to be the case in coming to know. It is knowledge arising from the inner that can be formulated in an outer word. This is in marked contrast with approaches to understanding cognition by way of theoretical constructs based on analysis of concepts, regarded as constituting the basic items of knowledge that determine how cognition must be understood. The outer word determines the understanding of what must be the case in the mind. Lonergan's work is an invitation to discover a praxeological foundation of knowledge of human knowing through self-appropriation of the mind's subjective operations. From the basis of interiority, as a further realm of meaning distinct from, and

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grounding, the realms common sense and theory, the conclusion is reached that objective knowledge is achieved through authentic subjectivity.

The implications of such a position for the theologian and theological method are far reaching. For, just as understanding is prior to conceptualisation, so religious conversion is prior to its objectification in forms of expression of religious belief. Authentic subjectivity and religious, moral and intellectual conversion are, therefore, central to theological reflection. In Lonergan's own words, "the basic idea of the method we are trying to develop takes its stand on discovering what human authenticity is and showing how to appeal to it".[141] The reality that is the intentional consciousness of the authentic subject being converted in love to God is the basis for theological reflection. The horizon of the religiously converted subject provides the foundation for theology that seeks to mediate the meaning and significance of faith and religious belief to a culture.

Since the ground of faith and theology is the human subject in a process of transformation through conversion, forms of expression of religious beliefs and doctrines are objectifications of the content of faith that is born of love rather than its foundation. Faith recognises that there are beliefs and doctrines that truly express the content of that reality but such recognition of truth is not readily apparent to the religiously unconverted. That which is referenced in doctrines and other forms of religious expression is not accessed by the apprehension of some supposed 'objective' truth that may be demonstrated by the application of reason. Authenticity and conversion, therefore, are a central and basic concern of theology.

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[141] *Method,* 254.

The following chapter will, therefore, address the question of authentic subjectivity, conversion, and theological method.

# Chapter Five

# Authentic Subjectivity and Theological Method

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the implications, for the theologian and theological method, of the conclusions reached in chapters two to four concerning the positions that objective knowledge is reached through authentic subjectivity and that the foundations of theology are in the converted subject rather than in formulations of the objectified content of faith.

To affirm the priority of understanding to conceptualisation and of religious conversion to faith and belief is to indicate that which is necessary or foundationally prior, as cause to effect or presuppositions to the development of suppositions. For the theologian and theological method, the major implications concern the consequences of the foundational priority of understanding and conversion rather than the priority of objects of knowledge or formulations of religious belief apprehended as universal truths or norms. In regard to the human subject, the major concern becomes the relation of the fulfilment of self-transcendence through religious conversion to the intellectual, rational and moral dimensions of human life. This chapter will address the need for, and consequences of, theologians and theology giving priority to the concrete particular and relational, through the differentiated consciousness made possible by interiority. Attending to subjectivity as the medium through which the love of God is received, and objective knowledge is attained, is the initial step towards recognising the necessity of formulations of objective finite expressions of truth. Such expressions, while they have the characteristics of abstract universals, always bear the limitations of the historical and cultural context in which they were formulated.

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The importance of this issue is evident in that the normal 'default' position operating in the western mind is one that regards the structure of self and world, subject and object, as the fundamental irreducible datum, evident in the doing or thinking of anything at all. Being brought (and caught) up with such a basic presupposition results in theology being undertaken with a 'mindset' that regards the subject-object 'split' as an *a priori*. The consequences of such a standpoint, for the theologian and theological method, will be explored and examples given of ways in which it influences or distorts theology.

## 5.2  Authentic Subjectivity and Conversion

The question of authentic subjectivity arises acutely with the affirmation of the fundamental importance of attending to subjectivity in order to understand objective knowing. According to the position that Lonergan retrieved from Aquinas and developed as the basis of theological method, self-knowledge of oneself as a knower and decider is a matter of affirming the subjective pattern of inter-related operations that constitutes the dynamism of intentional consciousness. In one of his summations, Lonergan described it as a matter of "affirming the reality of one's experienced and understood experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding".[1]

The meaning of the term 'authenticity' is then understood as fidelity to the norms inherent in intentional consciousness and summarised in the transcendental precepts to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and in love.[2] Being consistently alert and open to truth and reality and the good of true value from any source is an aspiration that runs into conflict with the desire to rest in the satisfaction of whatever limited self-transcendence has

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[1] Lonergan, *Method*. 15.
[2] As discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.10.3 pp215f.

already been achieved.[3]  A resistance may be discerned to questions that threaten possible disturbance of a sense of settled achievement in what is already known and valued.  The tension between the self as transcending and the self as transcended can result in the use of intelligence to rationalize the creation of defensive refuges designed to prevent the possible intrusion of more reality than we can bear.  Reality, of course, does not change because it is regarded as a threat or something to be avoided.  It is possible to choose to live behind barriers that disqualify discomforting questions and shut out aspects of reality rather than being open and attentive, and trusting the self-correcting process of learning inherent in the dynamism of human consciousness.  This tension is also evident at the level of community and tradition (religious, political, philosophical, etc) in debates, and attempts to disallow debate, when the possibility of further knowledge implies change perceived as threatening established positions.

Authenticity, therefore, is never a possession because it consists in "a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and every successful withdrawal only brings to light the need for still further withdrawals."[4]  The human dilemma is that there is always a gap between intention and actual achievement, because of oversights, misunderstandings, mistakes, bias and sin. It is illusory to imagine that more or better education, or a restructure of social institutions, or restoration of a past standpoint, are able, of themselves, to solve the basic dilemma. However worthwhile such projects may be, the fundamental and universal problem of the gap between aspiration and achievement indicates a basic need for the healing and transforming power of the goodness and love of God.  In such an enlarged and blessed

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[3] The operation of levels of consciousness as one of movement and rest is discussed by Lonergan in "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness", in Lonergan, *3rd Collection*. 172-175.
[4] ———, *Method*. 110

context, "the human good becomes absorbed in an all-encompassing good" and, being made in the image of God, "our authenticity consists in being like him, in self-transcending, in being origins of value, in true love."[5]  Faith is the apprehension of transcendent value generated by experience of being in love with God.  As experience of transforming love, it is lived in, or out of, prior to the arising of questions for understanding.  It will be communicated through forms of expression provided by a tradition and culture.

Authenticity, therefore, is linked directly to conversion, and movement towards it is made possible and desirable through the transforming power of boundless love.  It is not an ideal attained through determined perseverance or the right use of reason.  This is not to say, of course, that perseverance and reasoning have no place at all.  It is to be aware that just as there were no independent disinterested witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, so the experience of religious conversion, as a being-in-love with God that issues in faith, is not critically grounded in, or verifiable by, reason alone.  Reason cannot demonstrate that which is needed to satisfy the deepest human longing for God.  Faith is not mere assent to historical truth or correct formulations because its foundation is in the totally transforming gift of God's love, which, at the level of conscience, establishes love as the absolute norm of life.  Questions for understanding of faith arise spontaneously in many forms in different stages and realms of meaning.  The intellect is then immediately engaged but in differing ways.  Religiously differentiated consciousness, as Lonergan points out,

> .. can be content with the negations of an apophatic theology. For it is in love, and on its love there are no reservations or conditions or qualifications. … by such love one is oriented positively to what is transcendent in lovableness.  Such a positive orientation and the consequent self-surrender, as long as they are operative, enable one to dispense with any intellectual analogy

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[5] Lonergan, *Method*. 116, 117.

or concept; and when they cease to be operative, the memory of them enables one to be content with enumerations of what God is not.[6]

For others, questioning takes the form of seeking understanding of faith that relates it to other knowledge and other disciplines. In this situation, theological reasoning requires a methodology that is open to the transcendent and able to take account of faith as primarily relational and also open to inquiry, understanding and reasonable judgment. Such conditions are met in knowing our knowing from the 'inside out' rather than from the 'outside in'. Knowing from 'inside out' affirms the priority of self-knowledge as self-appropriation of the dynamism of intentional consciousness. Theology is then a matter of the authentic converted subject effecting self-appropriation and using such heightened consciousness as a basis for methodical control and the derivation of categories.[7] Knowing from 'outside in' claims the priority of assent to an external basis of knowledge in the form of a theoretical understanding of ontological structure, resulting in an epistemology that determines understanding of the capacity and limits of human knowing. Operating within such a framework, theology will develop categories that are held to exceed the bounds of human reason while being rationally argued on the basis of some form of experiential and critical verification. Such approaches will be further discussed and illustrated in sections 5.4 and 5.5 below.

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[6] "Unity and Plurality" in Lonergan, *3rd Collection*. 244. In a footnote to this passage Lonergan adds: "God's gift of his love is the cause of our knowledge of God by connaturality. See Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q.45, a.2c." It is interesting to note that Lonergan does not use the scholastic term 'connaturality' (denoting knowledge through God's presence in the self) in the many references to 'being in love with God' in *Method,* where some such reference might have been expected. It is a general term used in the absence of access to the realm of interiority, i.e., in the absence of intellectual conversion, and thus provides communication with a wider audience or readership

[7] See *Method,* 282-293 and chapter 4, section 4.10 above.

Religious conversion, like moral and intellectual conversion, is to be understood as an ongoing orientation rather than an event.[8]  Repentance and conversion is a process directed to becoming authentic at the level of deliberation, decision and action, where consciousness becomes conscience and the good of true value may be chosen and brought into being.[9] Fulfilment of the desire for the true, the real and the good is, therefore, through a way that involves a commitment to the task.  It is to embark on a self-correcting process whereby one learns from mistakes and errors in judgments of fact and value, repents of one's sins, through a change of mind, turns away from unauthenticity, gratefully dependent on the absolute understanding and love of God.  It is to take account of inquiring, knowing, feeling, deciding, acting and loving, with the intention of knowing what we feel, feeling what we know, and deciding and acting in the light of the gift of God's love. It is the decision and action of the human subject and it is simultaneously dependent on, and energised by, the love of God and, hopefully, encouraged by the loving support and understanding of a community.

In religious conversion, the infinite love of God directly connects with the naturally desired and known in the loving relations commonly recognised as giving finite meaning and purpose to life.[10]  Finite human fulfilment is set within a context of complete fulfilment in

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[8] "Unauthenticity is overcome by full conversion, that is not just the initial stages of religious, moral, and intellectual conversion but also the ongoing course of development to which conversion commits one." "Unity and Plurality" Lonergan, *3rd Collection*. 249.

[9] The New Testament Greek words *metanoia* and *epistrepho* translated as 'repentance' and 'convcrsion' indicate a need for a 'change of mind' (*metanoia*) and to 'turn back', 'turn around', 'return' (*epistrepho*). While there may be very significant and memorable occasions in which a change of mind and turning around has been effected, life is a continuing process of making decisions, even the decision not to reflect or decide. It is through the process of such reflection and decision (or indecision) that the human subject can be regarded as self-constituting. A clear and concise analysis of the good of true value is found in "The Subject" in ———, *2nd Collection*. 80-83.

conversion as the state of being in love with God that issues in a transforming re-evaluation of all values in a universal context. We are in relationship to God through our relation with others.[11] It is in our relation with the other, our neighbour, that we are given the opportunity of becoming more authentically who we are in the process of becoming - human subjects related to God. Questions about the 'meaning of life' cannot be answered by ideas or propositions but only by discovery of a way of living that leads to fulfilment of life for oneself and others.

Being human and in love with God is to be related to a universe of being that can be understood as a complex inter-relation of objects and living creatures that has developed over vast ages as products of emerging processes. Indigenous spirituality in many parts of the world has retained in its wisdom a sense of human life as fundamentally connected with, and dependent upon, the earth and other forms of life and of the precedence of 'we' to 'I', the priority of community over individuality. Acknowledgement of such interdependence might reasonably evoke a response of wonder and gratitude and a sense of what "ought" to be an appropriate response to other human beings, other creatures, and to the life-giving, sustaining and enriching environment we temporarily inhabit on earth. The fundamental concern is with a manner of life that contributes to the human good.

A close link, therefore, may be discerned between understanding and love. In human relationships, to be understood is a form of being valued or loved, and, being loved, is to

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[10] " …beyond the moral operator that promotes us from judgments of facts to judgments of value with their retinue of decisions and actions, there is a further realm of interpersonal relations and total commitment in which human beings tend to find the immanent goal of their being and, with it, their fullest joy and deepest peace." Bernard Lonergan, "Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, ed. and Robert M. Doran Robert C. Croken (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2004). 400.

[11] "When did we see you sick or in prison and go to see you? The King will answer, "Truly I say to you: whenever you did this to one of the least, to my brothers, you did it to me". (Mt 25:39-40)

feel sure of being understood. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that human expressions of love are often distorted by mixed motives and love may be conditional or the need for control may masquerade as love. Despite such possibilities, human subjects are able to recognise and positively respond to authentic love because it corresponds to, and fulfils, the dynamism of intentional consciousness. Authentic love is absolutely gratuitous and only when its pure gratuity is recognised is it received as genuine fulfilment. The experience of unauthentic expressions of love, therefore, may also be understood as experience of the absence of authentic love. It is possible to detect and identify from the contours of that which fails to satisfy as love, a 'space' that 'ought to be' filled in the dimensions of authentic love.[12] For most people this is a practical skill, learned as a matter of survival, rather than an intellectual activity. There is developed the common sense recognition that the many forms of selfishness constitute love's major obstacle. Reflection on the experience of love can lead to authentic love being recognised as seeking nothing other than love in return. It is unconditional, un-controlling and, therefore, inherently relational and responsive, the absolute opposite of being detached and remote. As incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, authentic love is seen to be vulnerable to those who react violently because it may be regarded as threatening all narrow vested self-interest.

Retreat from the demands of the dynamism of intentional consciousness that constitutes our openness to understanding, truth and love, detaches us from a sense of connectedness with our world, other people, and our own subjectivity and thus leads us into false and alienated

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[12] For a phenomenology of love that attempts this with considerable insight see W. H. Vanstone, *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense: The Response of Being to the Love of God.* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1977).

self-understandings. Sebastian Moore has argued that love, besides being the greatest fulfilment of life, is also perceived as its greatest threat. Inasmuch as we do not know ourselves constitutively as would-be self-transcending lovers, we are alienated from the truth and reality of our subjectivity. Love frightens us because it will not allow us to live in a private, me-for-me, solitude. God's love, revealed in human form in the fully authentic sinless person of Jesus Christ, is a searing power that burns away the layers of falsehood, accumulated through our own choices and the influences of our world that obscure our true selves from us.[13]

Being a subject intending authenticity in a process of conversion, therefore, is a matter of slow development through the ways of upward achievement and downward gift that have been previously described.[14] All such development is understood and valued in the context of being unconditionally loved by God. From the standpoint given through on-going conversion, the human subject is invited to participate in loving relation with the universe of being. That universe of being, of which every human being is a unique, known and loved part, is not an abstract idea but the concrete universal, created, sustained and loved by God, and a process of emerging possibilities. Self-knowledge of being-in-relation, or being-in-love, is knowledge of an on-going process that, while always open to further understanding, informs understanding of the experience of love's calling to follow in the way of Christ, the self-transcendence of the way of love, that is the way of the Cross, to eternal life.

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[13] Moore, *The Fire and the Rose*. passim, but especially 12-26; Sebastian Moore, *The Inner Loneliness* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1982). 7-43 and 103-120.
[14] See Chapter 4, sections 4.8.5 and particularly 4.8.7.

### 5.3 Authenticity, Conversion and Theological Foundations

Recognition of the centrality of conversion as a major theological reality is the basis on which theological foundations are understood as grounded in authentic converted subjects. When conversion is viewed as an on-going threefold process that is personal, communal, and historical, theological reflection becomes a consideration of the empirical reality of lived religion, its many partial expressions and its aberrations. As Lonergan once commented, conversion is "a topic little studied in traditional theology, since there remains very little of it when one reaches the universal, the abstract, the static."[15]

The systematic neglect of the subject that arises from assuming the priority of concepts over insights into phantasm leads to the generalization of concepts and then to the regimented application of ideas to a question or situation. But giving priority to acts of understanding means attending to the concrete, to experience, and to details of the particular that may be overlooked or dismissed as unimportant from a generalist standpoint. In this way, further understanding leads to greater knowledge. Relation to God has been understood in the Christian tradition as the loving relation of particular and unique human subjects to God. To consider that relation only from the perspective of the 'general' is to imagine some form of homogenized uniformity as a desirable goal of human life. This tension is reflected in the historical and on-going 'objective-institutional' and 'subjective-individualist' understandings of being the Church. It would appear to be a necessary tension insofar as human beings are necessarily involved in, and dependent upon, cooperation to achieve communal goals. Wisdom gained through being more consistently

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[15] Bernard Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context", in *A Second Collection,* 63.

and lovingly attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible is required for such tension to be resolved through further understanding.[16]

The movement to a methodical approach to theology is a transition from a basis of reasoning from premises to conclusions, which regards objectivity as totally 'other than' the inquiring and reasoning theologian, to a basis that recognises objectivity in theology as achieved 'through' the authentic subjectivity of theologians. The human subject is understood as 'subject' of consciousness, and as historical and self-constituting through deliberation and decisions, because of an autonomy that intends authenticity achieved in self-transcendence. This contrasts with notions of the human subject that begin by regarding the subject as object, as an instance of a universal human nature. While also enabling intelligent understanding and reasonable affirmation of the truth and authority of church doctrines, a focus on human beings as the subject of consciousness does not limit the freedom and responsibility for authenticity in the on-going self-constitution of the subject or the community of faith.

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[16] Many examples could be given. The most well known recent and much publicized situation in Australia concerns the Parish of St Mary's, Brisbane, a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive community, concerned for the poor, the marginalised and those disconnected from, or on the fringes of, the Church. Authorised forms of worship and ritual were modified to achieve inclusive language (eg 'Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer' replaced 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit'). No gender discrimination, lay participation, non-judgmental attitudes to sexual orientation, divorce and remarriage, exemplify the norms established. Following much debate, and publicity, the Priest in charge was suspended resulting in him, and the great majority of the congregation, meeting independently as 'St Mary's in Exile'.

The issue can be regarded as a clash between the priority of 'spirit' as outreach, pastoral care and concern for social justice and the priority of 'word' as orthodoxy that asserts Church teaching and the good of order as defined and prescribed by the Church. Media reports suggest that there was little understanding in the Parish of the meaning of Church teaching or why they could not do what they thought best for effective communication. Frustration with the detached ideology of authority combined with ignorance with the best intentions resulted in an inability to listen with understanding to the tradition. On the other hand, the more strident upholders of tradition made judgments as if there was nothing to learn from the situation. No attention was given to the work of the Parish, as reflecting the description of the ministry of Jesus in welcoming the estranged and marginalized, and the situation was regarded only as a threat to the integrity of the Church.

Opportunities for repentance and conversion arise continually. Only a willingness by all involved to listen to one another in love can overcome such divisions and enable the possibility of mutual enrichment.

When the foundations of theology are understood as centred in the converted human subject, questions about the relation of faith and reason are transposed into questions about conversion and authenticity. They are questions that directly concern human subjects regarding both the major authenticity of the tradition out of which a theologian operates and the minor personal authenticity of the theologian. While 'tradition' in Christian theology is primarily understood as referring to particular traditions within Christianity, the present concern is with the 'conceptualist' or 'intellectualist' traditions that operate across and within the various Christian traditions.

## 5.4  Conceptualist Approaches to Religious Truth, Meaning and Value

In contrast to an intellectualist approach to theological method through the authentic converted subject, a standpoint that understands concepts as prior to understanding will regard the human subject only as an object. The possibilities and conditions of human knowing are then defined by reasoning from basic premises to conclusions and theological foundations are regarded as residing in the truth of its premises, usually understood as defined in dogma or Church doctrines. Theology may then consist of attempts to critically establish the foundations of theology through historical verification or some form of empirical or philosophical analysis of the human condition that demonstrates a natural inherent disposition towards the question of, or need for, God.

The main argument of the thesis has been that concepts are formulations of acts of understanding. They are abstractions identifying the universal in the particular, accounting for its intelligibility, and static because they are incapable of change in themselves. Only understanding brings about change, as further questions give rise to new insights and the

formulation of revised or new concepts. Concepts, therefore, are expressions of that which is understood. They are not that by which we come to understand.

Bias toward the products of our knowing rather than attending to the subjective means of arriving at knowledge produces conceptualism. Lonergan described conceptualism as "a strong affirmation of concepts, and a skeptical disregard of insights". He sees its basic defects as an anti-historical immobilism, excessive abstractness, and an abstract concept of being – indeed, "the most abstract of all abstractions, least in connotation and greatest in connotation".[17]

Neglect of the subject can result in a failure to take account of the fact that forms of expression of religious meaning and value are the products of human minds. The static nature of conceptualisations can be mistaken as establishing basic unchanging principles from which theological reflection proceeds logically and rationally to conclusions. As abstractions, conceptual formulations may be detached from the subjective conditions from which they arise and in which they are received. The subject is then regarded only as object and not 'as subject'. The vital and intimate connection between the dynamism of consciousness and the meaning and content of conceptual formulations is overlooked and feeds into self-understanding as a disconnection between subject and object, an incarnation of the subject-object split. A gap is introduced between the subject and the content and meaning of expressions of religious belief.

Religious truth may then be regarded primarily as correct statements of belief external to the subject, and verified by authority or demonstrated by reason, rather than as expressions

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[17] Bernard Lonergan, "The Subject", in Lonergan, *2nd Collection*. 74, 75.

of a relationship.  It can then be appealed to as an objective external authoritative word that commands the acceptance or obedience of human subjects without giving attention to the need for a sense of inner connection with, and understanding of, its meaning.  Behind this endeavour lies the hope that the gap created by the subject-object split will be bridged by the achievement of correct conclusions. They become crucial because only the acceptance of correct understanding will be effective in relating the subject to the content of belief.  It is neglect of the subject and neglect of understanding and on-going conversion that allows the meaning and content of conceptual expressions of belief to be obscured, or even severed, from the concrete existing subject.  It is religious conversion as an on-going relationship of being in love with God, rather than persuasion by reasoned argument, that enables recognition of the truth of conceptual expressions of religious belief.

A persistent danger of conceptualism is that of the content of religious belief being understood and acted upon only as an idea.  Much of the language of the Church refers to the presence of God or the human relation to God but does so at one remove in conceptual formulations.  Communication about God requires forms of expression that are earthed in the concrete and immediate situation.  Limited to the 'idea' of love and the 'idea' of the good, religion and theology can become an escape into a realm of ideas.  The tradition as a grand idea, lacking connection to the subject except as an idea, is a possible realization of the misunderstanding of understanding that regards the relation of subject and object as a fundamental separation.  Immense tension between head and heart, thinking and feeling, can be the result, and attempted resolutions often involve repression of feeling and/or a selective distortion or abandonment of thinking.  This often has dire consequences for individual human subjects and their communities, as repressed feeling demands an outlet

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and, divorced from an adequately functioning intellect, can result in much distress and harm to many. Combined with an obsessive concern with 'religion', as the holding of 'right' ideas, saying the 'right' words, or performing 'correct' forms of ritual, it leads to the many commonly expressed forms of disparagement of religion and theology.

Such situations indicate the need for self-appropriation in which the mind claims its own subjectivity, inclusive of both affectivity and thinking. Interiority becomes a further realm of meaning that sublates common sense and theory and discerns their relation to the dynamism of intentional consciousness toward unconditional fulfilment in absolute self-transcendence.[18] That inner movement is identified by Lonergan as the source of "the primary and fundamental meaning of the name, 'God'."[19] While it is possible to become far too concerned with religion, it is impossible to be too responsive and dependent on the eternal love of God who saves and liberates.

Many, of course, would endorse such a declaration, but the question at issue is the basis of understanding from which such a statement might be made and why that basis matters. Paul Tillich, for example, would certainly agree but from a conceptualist basis. In the following section his approach to theological method will be considered as a means of contrasting the conceptualist and intellectualist positions.

## 5.5  A Conceptualist Approach to Method in Theology

Attention was drawn in chapter three to Paul Tillich's self-understanding as 'Augustinian' and his mistaken understanding of Aquinas as opposed to the position of Augustine

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[18] Perhaps in response to what T.S. Eliot calls "the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling."
[19] Lonergan, *Method*. 342.

regarding the human relation to God.[20]  Lonergan and Tillich both discerned the main task of theology to be the mediation of faith to culture.  Recognising that traditional approaches were inadequate for the task, they became concerned about an appropriate theological method that would be able to engage with current developments of thought.  Being largely contemporaneous and having similar aims, it is possible to compare and contrast their approaches to theological method and highlight the issues involved in the distinction between their basic positions.[21]  Here only a brief summary statement of Tillich's basic approach to theology will be given.

Three basic starting points determine Tillich's approach.  Firstly, a structural analysis of the concept of being results in the view that self and world, subject and object, constitute the basis of ontological structure.  Self and world, therefore, is the fundamental presupposition present in the thinking or doing of anything.[22]  Secondly, conversion that issues in faith is considered vital for theology as the centre out of which the Church and theologian live.[23] He characterized the experience as one of being grasped by 'ultimate concern', a term intended to be an "abstract translation of the great commandment" because all-embracing love is the only possible response to the love of God.[24]  Thirdly, the reality of revelation is

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[20] In chapter 3, section 3.3.3 above.

[21] Their respective Protestant and Catholic traditions provide an obvious source of difference but the fundamental difference can be identified as that between their conceptualist and intellectualist positions on knowing. Tillich is reported as stating, in an informal gathering of philosophers, that his spiritual father was Schleiermacher, his intellectual father was Schelling, and his grandfather on both sides was Jakob Boehme, Nels F.S. Ferre, *Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future.* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966).
This clearly indicates that he saw his work in the tradition of a continuing reformation committed to addressing contemporary questions and recognising the need for new forms of theological expression.

[22] Tillich, *Syst Theol 1.* 163-174

[23] Tillich, *Syst Theol 1.* 11-12.

[24] ———, *Syst Theol 1.* 11. Lonergan equated 'ultimate concern' with his own description of 'being in love with God.' Lonergan, *Method.* 106. 105-127. Tillich likens knowledge to love in that both are forms of union of the separated who belong to each other and want to reunite. Paul Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc, 1967). 67.

an unveiling of the mystery of holiness that is our ultimate concern and remains mysterious even in being revealed.[25]

In making the distinction between self and world the basic presupposition and irreducible basis of ontological structure, Tillich established, by conceptual analysis, a philosophical basis as essential to his theological reflection as conversion, faith and revelation. The cognitional relation of subject and object becomes a question of understanding the possibility of union through separation.

> Detachment is the condition of cognitive union. In order to know, one must "look" at a thing, and in order to look at a thing, one must be "at a distance". Cognitive distance is the presupposition of cognitive union. … The unity of distance and union is the ontological problem of knowledge. [26]

The solution to the problem of knowledge, therefore, is that union is possible because the world is a structured whole through the logos structure that constitutes 'objective reason' and the self is a centred structure of 'subjective reason' that participates in the objective logos structure. Tillich regarded theological method as a 'tool' employed to enable objects of knowledge to be transposed from one context or situation to another.[27] Ontological structure provides that basic tool but considers the subject only as object. Such a basis means that it was impossible for Tillich to consider the possibility of discussing method apart from, or prior to, the necessity for transporting objects of knowledge from one set of historical and cultural conditions to the contemporary situation. His prior concern was the acquisition of knowledge about the adequacy of the 'tool' or system of ontological structure

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[25] Tillich, *Syst Theol 1*. 106-159.

[26] ———, *Syst Theol 1*. 94.

[27] "A method is a tool, literally a way round, which must be adequate to its subject matter." … "For systematic theology this means that its method is derived from a prior knowledge of the system which is to be built by the method." Tillich, *Syst Theol 1*. 59,60.

used to implement the method of correlation, by which he intended to bring situation and Christian message into relationship as question and answer.

The intentional ambiguity of the term 'ultimate concern' allows it to refer to both the subjective act of being ultimately concerned and the object of ultimate concern.[28] Conceptual analysis to discover the 'structure' of ultimate concern indicates that, in a more general sense, the term denotes the integrating centre of a person's life as their 'faith'. Faith is then understood as a state of being directed toward what one believes is of ultimate concern but may in fact be only a preliminary concern and, therefore, inadequate, or false and even demonic.[29] On this basis, the encounter of Christian faith with secularism becomes one of faith with faith, and conversion becomes not a matter of prevailing arguments but of personal surrender.[30]

Analysis of the 'structure' of the term 'ultimate concern', while providing cautionary insight into possible distortions of faith, does not address religious conversion as an on-going relation of being in love with God that is a call to authenticity and issues in faith as belief. Faith, for Tillich, is an existential stance of ultimate concern, a point of immediate awareness of 'being grasped' that has no objectifiable content, and therefore, is unknowable by the intellect.

From the absolute distinction between essence and existence (infinite and finite) resulting in God never being regarded as an object, Tillich draws the further conclusion that it is

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[28] Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957). 4-8.
[29] Recalling life in Germany in the early 1930's, Tillich referred to the nation becoming the only God - "a god who certainly proves to be a demon, but who shows clearly the unconditional character of an ultimate concern." Tillich, *Dynamics*. 2.
[30] ———, *Dynamics*. 107. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Vol 3; Life and the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). 139.

impossible for any events or words to convey objective knowledge of God. As a result all forms of religious expression, including Church doctrines, are understood as symbolic or mythological forms of expression of the revelatory experience of being grasped by ultimate concern, and that alone. There are revelatory events and situations but no such thing as revelation 'in general' or revealed doctrines. Events and situations may be described or defined in doctrinal terms but "ecclesiastical doctrines are meaningless if separated from the revelatory situation out of which they have come."[31] Revelation, therefore, does not convey knowledge about God but only of the experience of being grasped by ultimate concern. Symbols, and their narrative expression in mythology, are the only means of referring to God.[32] The only exception is the statement that everything that is said about God is symbolic.[33] Some such assertion is recognised as required in order to avoid theology collapsing into a circular argument.

Regarded from the perspective of Lonergan's realms and stages of meaning, Tillich denies that any second stage finite, theoretically expressed knowledge of God is possible. The only possible expressions of mediated immediacy of transcendent mystery are through first stage images, symbols and mythology. He draws the further conclusion that the 'God of theism' must be transcended by the notion of a 'God above God' and an "absolute faith", as

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[31] Tillich, *Syst Theol 1*. 125.

[32] Symbol is a technical term for Tillich. Symbols 'relate' to the non-symbolic because they participate in the reality to which they point through self-negation. The classic example is the Cross of Jesus Christ as symbol of the centre of the Christian message. In the revelatory event "Jesus as the Christ", the basic criterion that justifies its claim to be the final revelation is found to be "that a revelation is final if it has the power of negating itself without losing itself". As soon as any object is understood as being 'holy' in itself, rather than a symbol pointing to 'The Holy', it becomes an idol.

[33]Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Vol 2; Existence and the Christ* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957). 9. This is an amended attempt to make a 'non-symbolic statement'. His previous, and much criticised, 'non-symbolic' statement was that "God is Being-itself". Tillich, *Syst Theol 1*. 239.

the state of "being grasped by the God beyond God".[34]  Any form of words or events that

purport to give finite knowledge of the infinite realm of transcendent mystery are,

therefore, idolatrous.

Lonergan referred to Tillich as being mistaken in considering "any dogmatic religion to be

an idolatory simply because it attributes an absolute value to finite truth", but immediately

added the comment "but finite truth cannot be treated as though it were infinite and as

though it were beyond criticism, and to treat it as though it were beyond criticism is to set

up an idol." [35]  The added comment indicates precisely the origin of the danger that alarmed

Tillich while disagreeing with the conclusion that he drew about finite knowledge of God.

Lonergan is able to recognise the absolute value of finite truth as a virtually unconditioned

and acknowledge the possibility of it being misunderstood as infinite.  His viewpoint has its

origin in self-appropriation and interiority as a third realm and stage of meaning.  From that

perspective he is able to take account of the mind's operations when regarding objects of

thought because it is through them that cognitive union of subject and object occurs.  Finite

knowledge of God has value in providing forms of expression that can be affirmed as true

while also being recognised as subject to all the inherent limitations that origination in a

particular time and place imposes.  In his discussion of metaphysics as dialectic in *Insight,*

Lonergan deduced that Tillich reached the conclusion that finite apprehension of God as

'Being-itself' is necessarily steeped in mythology because "if being is not the intelligibly

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[34] A description of what Tillich understands as involved in that viewpoint is found in the conclusion of Paul
Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (London: Collins Fontana Library, 1952). 180-183. It is clear from such passages
that Tillich is personally involved in his objectified account of religious conversion. Similar references are
also found in his published sermons, a striking example being in "Faith and Uncertainty" on page 77 of Paul
Tillich, *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955).
[35] Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, ed. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe, vol. 10 CWL
(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). 32.

grasped and the reasonably affirmed, the possibility of metaphysics is excluded, and the conclusions of Dr Tillich are unavoidable."[36]

Tillich's thought lacks the capacity to discern that objectification for the purpose of understanding is not necessarily tied to objectification as the positing of an object over against the self. To affirm that God cannot be regarded as an object among others does not prevent God being an object of thought, the content of a subject's intentional act, as in being the intended object of human worship or questioning. Tillich's own work is evidence of such objectification but, because his basic theoretical framework regards the subject only as an object, he employed an inadequate methodical 'tool' for his task. It does not allow for categories that might have enabled the discernment of the crucial distinction concerning an intended object that is drawn by Lonergan and that is clear from the perspective of the differentiation of consciousness enabled by interiority as a realm of meaning.

The association of transcendence with symbol and mythological narrative may be affirmed as a necessary and creatively imaginative means of communicating truth 'of the heart' that cannot be accounted for within the confines of a narrowly defined rationalism. A notion of transcendence may then continue to exert a powerful constitutive and effective meaning for individuals and groups while having only a vague cognitive meaning. This is the position of many people of faith who find theoretic mediation of the realm of transcendence abstract and often unintelligible. Mystical or contemplative traditions have always recognised that God is known only through love, and that a 'cloud of unknowing' obscures all approaches through reason. It is the gift of love that fulfils the dynamism of human consciousness and establishes the intimate relation between God as Love and the human subject, and faith is

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[36] Lonergan, *Insight*. 566/7

grounded in the love that awakens religious conversion.  The gift of God's love, therefore, has priority for an authentic understanding of faith.  In God, boundless love is also infinite understanding, and human understanding, regarded as a created participation in the infinite understanding love that is God, naturally seeks an appropriate proportionate finite understanding of that which is experienced in being in love with God.

While sharing a concern to mediate faith to culture, Tillich and Lonergan arrive at very different conclusions about theological method, its basis and possible conclusions.  This may be regarded as due to the influence of their respective traditions but, in fact, they are largely determined by their respective conceptualist or intellectualist positions.

Lonergan's intellectualist position indicates the need for a further transposition that is able to take account of the realms of common sense and theory and to mediate meaning on a level that relates directly to human consciousness.  Contemporary questions often concern the need for understanding of the relation of the Christian message to the human subject in terms that relate personally and concretely to life experience.  Interiority, as a third realm of meaning that sublates theory and common sense and through religious conversion is attuned to the realm of transcendence, is crucial for theological method as envisaged by Lonergan.  A later section (5.9) of this chapter will give an example of theology from the realm of interiority.

### 5.6  The Problem of Continuity and Development

Conceptualism has a further problem because of its inability to account for development and change.  "You have to be in the concrete to study development.  Abstractions do not

move, do not develop, do not change."[37]  All expressions of religious meaning and value are historically conditioned because "concepts have dates", as Lonergan is reported to have said.[38]  History records a pluralism of forms of expression of religious belief.  It is obvious that the meaning of words and expressions changes over time and from place to place and that to enter ancient forms of thought is to discover another 'world' of meaning.  As a result, classic expressions of religious belief are easily misunderstood or simply not understood.  Continuity of understanding with the past requires understanding of the past and the present situation to effect the necessary transposition.  Theological understanding is not simply a matter of defining the meaning of terms and deducing conclusions from established premises.  At a foundational level, the subject is intimately involved because questions for understanding of that which is known through faith always include questions about the need for further conversion of the questioner.[39]

In an attempt to counteract perceived threats, such as relativism, classic forms of religious expression may be misappropriated as ahistorical, in a move that turns recognition of their classic nature into 'classicism'.  It is easy to slip into the view that the truth, as an objective reality, is 'already-out-there' in classic expressions or definitions.  Whereas the study of classic texts that "ground a tradition" and "create a cultural milieu in which they are studied and interpreted" can be the source of much learning, a reliance on them as definitive expressions is deficient if the sole concern is relay authoritative 'answers'.  There will be little or no understanding, or encouragement of adult responsible faith, if there is no

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[37] Lonergan, *Topics in Education*. 83.
[38] Frederick E. Crowe, "An Expansion of Lonergan's Notion of Value", *Lonergan Workshop Volume 7,* ed. Fred Lawrence, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 52.

[39] On the basis argued in sections 5.2 and 5.3 above.

attention to questions, both those that occasioned the classic text and those emerging today.[40]  Simply repeating a form of words is not necessarily to mean an originally intended meaning.  Further, and most disturbingly, the encouragement of reliance on definitions or formulations without understanding, and the lauding of mindless fideism as exemplary child-like faith, is a classic means of maintaining authoritarian control, as totalitarian regimes and religious fanatics have demonstrated throughout history.  Unity of faith is not grounded in classic formulations but in religious conversion as being in love with God with all its implications for human living.[41]  Classic formulations will always require 'translation' into terms used in the common sense operating in various contexts, both of culture and of differentiations of consciousness.  To communicate, theology must always be contemporary.

The normative structure of intentional conscious that is the basis of transcendental method is transcultural.[42]  It provides the basis that enables meaning to be conveyed and received while adopting different form of expression in different contexts.  It is also the basis, given that the love of God remains constant and unchangeable, for understanding continuity in a history of change and development (or decline) in respect of human expressions of religious meaning and value.  As new questions arise, the possibility is created for further development of understanding.  Authentic development of understanding will be in continuity with prior authentic understandings that, in turn, are acknowledged as developments in understanding at the time of their original formulation.  Authenticity of forms of religious expression is not the result of logical deduction from premises but arises

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[40] Lonergan, *Method*. 161-2.
[41] See *Method,* 326-7 where the distinction is drawn between two ways in which the unity of faith may be conceived.
[42] See 4.8.1 and 4.8.2 above reflecting on the Introduction and chapter 1 of *Method.*

out of the need for further understanding in concrete situations faced by human subjects who, being in love with God, are open to on-going conversion, further knowledge and are attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible.

## *5.7  Authenticity in Questioning Understandings of Belief*

A serious difficulty arises if asking questions about expressions of religious belief is regarded as an offence against God.  In his short story "Pigeon Feathers", John Updike provided a telling description of a youth asking his own real questions during a catechetical instruction class.  The mere asking of the questions provokes a sense "of a naughtiness occurring" as though "an indiscretion had been committed" and the questions were "violating some tacit secret held by the class and (their instructor)."[43]  To ask genuine questions in such a context requires courage.  It is much easier, even a relief, to repress them and accept ready-made propositions and definitions.  In one decision, human intelligence, reason and responsibility for decision can be surrendered to the mind of the community in all matters of religious understanding and practice, with direct implications for all aspects of personal and social life.

If we persist with questioning (or, as it may be experienced, if the questioning persists with us) we are faced with the long tradition of warnings about the impossibility of coming to understanding without belief that is the response of religious conversion to the love of God. The prayer of Anselm in the *Proslogion* reflects on this beautifully while indicating an appropriate place for questions and understanding.

> *Lord, I am not trying to make my way to your height,*
> *for my understanding is in no way equal to that,*

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[43] John Updike, "Pigeon Feathers", *Forty Stories,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987), 30-31.

*but I do desire to understand a little of your truth*
*which my heart already believes and loves.*
*I do not seek to understand so that I may believe,*
*but I believe so that I may understand;*
*and what is more,*
*I believe that unless I do believe I shall not understand.*[44]

Theology, therefore, is reflection in the sense that it is response. There would be no search for understanding if God had not already awakened the desire for communion in us. Lonergan's analysis of the structure of coming to know by belief, and the distinction between faith and belief, enables Anselm to be understood as praying for understanding of beliefs already recognised as true by faith *("which my heart already believes and loves").*[45] It is not that understanding can be extrapolated to generate an assent of faith or make faith certain. Rather it is faith that recognises the beliefs that become the subject of questions for understanding. If Anselm were not already religiously converted, with the consequent gift of faith that recognises beliefs, there would be no possibility for him to grow in understanding of his belief.

Believing is the appropriate response to truth that is beyond our capacity to achieve by our own reason. Basic truths known by faith, such as that God is love, God was incarnate in Jesus, the way of the cross is the way to life, or the blessedness of the poor, the merciful and the meek, are known only as a result of God's self-revelation. No degree of human self-transcendence or intensity of desire for unconditional love is able to account for religious truth. It only begins to make sense as reflection on conversion resulting from experience of the gift of God's love. Doctrines or dogma are formulations of judgments

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[44] St. Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm,* (trans. Sr. Benedicta Ward), (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), 244.
[45] *Method,* 41-47 and 118-119 and referred to in 4.8.3 and 4.8.5 above.

that ensue from religious conversion. Faith as 'the eye of love' recognises that particular judgments contained in doctrines are central to life and give definitive expression to a basic standpoint. Doctrines do not constitute the revealed truth of religion but are expressions that determine the ways in which religious truth can be authentically expressed and, therefore, are essential to all understanding of faith.

Expressions of religious meaning and value acknowledged as authoritative have a constitutive role in the religious tradition of a community. Personal and social identity results from belonging to communities sharing basic meanings and values. The basis for seeking understanding of expressions of religious meaning and value is that they may be understood as resulting from some form of experience, understanding and judgment. Attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible inquiry, through research, interpretation, history and dialectic, is able to discover the beliefs, meanings, assumptions, and common sense of others and, thereby, establish communication.

A differentiated consciousness that is able to distinguish and relate the various realms of meaning is required to be able to account for and understand the diversity of forms of religious expression. The realms of common sense, theory, interiority and transcendence are understood as appropriate for different forms of expression of meaning and value. The language of transcendence is used for describing the prior inner word received in the mystery of love and awe. Interiority is appropriate for foundations that set basic terms and relations and recognise doctrines. Theory is appropriate for coherent and systematic understanding and common sense for proclamation and teaching.

Understanding of the order, method and fulfilment of human consciousness, the nature and operation of forms of bias, and authentic subjectivity and religious conversion lead us to the conclusion that any examination of the authenticity of forms of expression of religious belief requires an authentic and religiously converted subject. The nature of the data to be understood differs from that studied by natural science and the process of coming to a judgment requires a different approach and expectation of outcomes.

Any form of expression of religious belief is prone to a variety of interpretations and judgments that are mainly influenced by prior convictions brought to the task. Theological consideration requires attention to an individual and/or communal source together with an openness to a necessary critical self-reflection with respect to inherited and achieved convictions, since self-understanding and identity is involved in coming to judgments of fact and value about expressions of religious meaning and value. Openness to all questions requires a capacity to ask serious questions about oneself and one's own beliefs. Uncritical assumption of philosophical or theological views, or the avoidance of research or dialogue or self-reflection, can obviously prevent the possibility of authentic judgment. It may happen that a judgment of religious belief is correct but held as a prejudice, rather than something attentively and intelligently understood, reasonably known and responsibly acted upon. In that case, correct formulations can do disservice to the truth for, with respect to religious belief, the manner in which truth is held and expressed matters as much as the truth itself.

### 5.8  Authenticity of the Subject and the Tradition

The question of authenticity in regard to understanding of religious belief has two aspects. There is the authenticity of the subject with regard to the religious beliefs of a tradition and

the authenticity of the tradition itself. It will be recalled that Lonergan concludes that the authenticity of the subject is minor whereas authenticity of the tradition is major because it provides the context within which the minor question of the authenticity of the subject may be realised.[46]

Questions about authenticity of a tradition arise in the context of understanding that the relationship to God is expressed primarily through a way of life expressed in relationships with others and only secondarily, but importantly in conceptual formulations. The Christian community of faith is called to a way of life that is patterned on the life of Jesus Christ. It involves commitment, characterized by openness and generosity towards the 'other', to assist progress and development, resist decline and ameliorate its effects in the world. An openness to the Spirit is required that, confident of the love of God, is unafraid of the other and ready to engage with culture, being as ready to affirm as to protest and as ready to listen as to speak.

The tension between the self as transcending and the self as transcended results in the constant temptation to rest in past achievements rather than maintaining open-mindedness to the possibility of further understanding and knowledge. Authorities, as guardians of a tradition, are likely to be suspicious about claims to further knowledge and anxious to maintain confidence that all that could ever need to be known on a question is already known.

The desire for the assurance of the familiar and settled, especially when combined with group bias and a misunderstanding of knowing that causes bias toward the products of our

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[46] See *Method,* 80 and discussion Chapter 4, section 4.8.4 above.

knowing, can lead to oversight of the basic fact that the authority of expressions of religious meaning and value stems from their acceptance by a community. The power of determining authority ultimately resides in the community. The legitimacy of such determinations, therefore, depends upon the authenticity of the community and the subjects who constitute it. Similarly the authenticity of authorities, appointed to act on behalf of a community, has also to be considered in the application of authority in particular situations. A complex set of interacting factors is at work, as Lonergan has described.

> Legitimated by authenticity authority and authorities have a hold on the consciences of those subject to authority and authorities. But when they lack the legitimating by authenticity, authority and authorities invite the consciences of subjects to repudiate their claim to rule. However, subjects may be authentic or unauthentic. Insofar as they are authentic, they will accept the claims of legitimate authority and legitimate authorities and they will resist the claims of illegitimate authority and illegitimate authorities. On the other hand, insofar as they are unauthentic, they will resist legitimate claims, and they will support illegitimate claims.[47]

The misuse of authority can thus occur in many ways. It may be disregarded or become the subject of rationalizations. In respect to expressions of religious meaning and value this may result in sentimental or vacuous simplifications or self-justification of positions taken. Authorities may wrongly apply authority if their interest in maintaining continuity is threatened by questions that open up possibilities of revised understanding and further knowledge with direct implications for established positions or counter-positions.

On the basis of the understanding reached in this thesis, the discernment of authentic authority is a realization of the authenticity of the converted subject. There can be no authoritarian basis for coming to understanding and knowledge that, neglecting the subject, is imagined as an objective 'thing' that all are invited to recognise and accept. Authority is only an authority to those who have chosen to recognise it as such. That choice cannot be

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[47] Bernard Lonergan, "Dialectic of Authority", in *A Third Collection,* 8.

explained on the basis of the authority and, therefore, the norm for recognition of authority must be found in the subject who chooses.

The effects of this conclusion are far-reaching and profound in supporting the primacy of the liberty of conscience over allegiance to authority. There can be no doubt that conscience needs to be 'informed' but the 'informed' conscience cannot simply be equated with 'conformed' consciousness commended by authorities. Being informed is ever the result of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, and in love with God. The arising of questions and the seeking of answers is the means of development of understanding for both the subject and the community, so that openness to further questions is a fundamental characteristic of authenticity. It is that which cuts through ignorance, prejudice, bias and dogmatism, the latter understood in its pejorative sense of the unauthentic use of authority whereby 'classic' formulations become part of a 'classicist' approach.[48]

There are also, of course, many ways in which expressions of religious belief can be partially and unauthentically appropriated through a combination of inattention, ignorance, and undetected rationalizations. Then questions arise through lack of conversion or because the tradition has been misunderstood. Misunderstanding and misappropriation of a tradition leads to devaluation or corruption of meaning that can affect a whole community. Whenever unauthenticity and lack of conversion are present, a gap is created between the subject and the meaning and content of forms of expression of religious meaning and value. Authentic discernment of truth in forms of expression of religious belief is a process that

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[48] See Introduction to *Method, xi-xii* and discussion in 4.8.1 above.

can only take place as a subject authentically seeks understanding. Authentic discernment of truth, therefore, is the truth of our discernment. The possibility of authentic discernment is present as long as there is openness to questions and a desire to understand and know truth and reality. It becomes impossible when questions for understanding are repressed.

The challenge for a community and tradition is to share good news with the other in contemporary terms, trusting the self-correcting process of learning, which may be regarded as belief in the Holy Spirit and confidence that nothing that is true or good is alien to God. A defensively minded negative attitude, where self-understanding is primarily defined in terms of what one is not or is against, alienates a community of faith from the culture and hinders communication. This is exacerbated when authoritarian assertions of formulaic answers are accompanied by attempts to stifle questioning. A conceptualist approach that deduces logical and necessary conclusions from 'infallible' sources will result in theology as the self-justification of the basic propositions of a tradition.

Embarking on the self-correcting process of learning that is marked by the necessity of on-going conversion is both fraught with difficulties and the way of progress and liberation. It constitutes the tradition and the human subject in the process of becoming authentic through observing the transcendental precepts or of becoming unauthentic through cumulative decisions that reject the invitation to self-transcendence that is native to human being.

On the other hand, convinced of the fundamental nature of a subject-object split and unknowingly suffering from neglect of the subject, the questioning, religiously converted (but intellectually unconverted) theologian will seek to bridge the gap for understanding

created by that assumption and neglect. Authentic forms of religious expression are often misunderstood in the attempt. A tradition will become unauthentic to the extent that it is informed by such misunderstandings.

## 5.9 Theology from the Realm of Interiority

As previously established, the realm of interiority is basic to theological method as envisaged by Lonergan in that it enables differentiation of consciousness.[49] Sebastian Moore is a theologian who acknowledges an indebtedness to Lonergan and exemplifies theology based on interiority.[50]

Moore's concern is to elucidate from interiority, as that which makes possible the analysis of conscious intentionality, the essential connection between Christian faith and being human. His focus, therefore, is primarily psychological. In this he also follows Lonergan who states that the necessary shift beyond intellectualism and voluntarism to intentionality analysis means "that the basic terms and relations of systematic theology will not be metaphysical, as in medieval theology, but psychological. … For every [metaphysical] term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness".[51] Moore is acutely aware that the Christian message and doctrines need to resonate in consciousness if they are to become a reality for us. What is held to constitute primary 'data' for theological reflection is the religiously converted human subject's own experience. It is unsurprising that this has led to Moore's work being categorized as

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[49] *Method,* 81-99, This is discussed in the concluding pages of Chapter 4, and section 4.8.4 above. See also *Method* 257-262, 265-266.
[50] In referring to the need for "a new modernity ... that would sharpen our awareness of ourselves in the world we now inhabit", Moore acknowledges Lonergan as "the master in whose school I have known something of this priceless awareness, as undeniable by him who has it as is the enjoyment of Mozart." Moore, *The Fire and the Rose.* xiv.
[51] Lonergan, *Method*. 343.

"spiritual theology", which evoked his response - "I wish people wouldn't call this stuff spiritual theology. It is a somewhat gauche attempt to do real theology in a world whose intellectual climate is still divorced from feeling."[52]

"Gauche attempt" or not, Moore's theological reflection is challenging and stimulating because it is concerned with the fundamental derivation of Christian doctrines in relation to human consciousness and in particular to 'desire'. It is certainly not an attempt to return to a pre-critical approach, as an awareness of theory is always apparent in his work. He goes beyond retelling the story, or theoretically elucidating its rational meaning, in order to address meaning at the level of the transformation of subjectivity through religious conversion.

Moore finds 'desire' to be fundamental to being human, evidenced in our sense of personal worth being enhanced when we know ourselves as desired by the one whom we desire.[53] At its deepest level, desire is the desire for ultimate significance, to be of significance to God. Because desire is fundamentally oriented to the Other, who is our origin, we feel more intensely alive, more ourselves, when we know we are desirable to a desired other. An attempt to formulate what Moore describes as "a grammar of desire" establishes "three axioms. … We only live by desire. We only desire out of a sense of being desirable. We only feel desirable absolutely because we are absolutely desired."[54]

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[52] Sebastian Moore, "Four Steps toward Making Sense of Theology," *Downside Review* 111, No 383 (1993). 81.

[53] Moore begins from the standpoint of his Catholic tradition in which desire is not understood as being radically corrupted by original sin, as it is from a traditional Lutheran standpoint. There, under the name 'concupiscence', corrupt desire is original sin. From a Catholic perspective, 'concupiscence' is a tendency toward sin that, in a state of grace, does not have to be acted upon.

[54] Sebastian Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity from Oedipus to Christ* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers Inc, 1986). xi. The summary statement that "desire is love trying to happen" is another encapsulation of his understanding and its implications are discussed in Sebastian Moore, *The*

The problem of sin is the pervasive sense of not being desirable, of being worthless, of not being for the other, of failing the other, of guilt. The loss of a sense of being desirable is original sin. It goes back to early childhood with experiences from which one learns that desire cannot be trusted, one is 'sinned against' and ushered into participation in sin.

> The sense of desirability, that directed me happily through life in infancy, now no longer works for me. … So my sense of being desirable ceases to be trustworthy as a guiding principle. I don't *do* what is good. So not feeling good is the *origin* of the *sin* of not doing what is good. It is the 'original sin', the origin of sin.[55]

Sin results in living within reduced limits. It leads to a withdrawal into self and repression of the thought of death. Because desire is our being, it continues to operate but makes us feel unhappy, empty, and lonely, with an essential inner 'split'. There is likely to be resentment toward God who is viewed, through projection, as a fearful and powerful Judge.

To understand how Jesus effects the liberation of desire, it must be considered firstly through the paschal experience of his first disciples. Jesus was without sin, that is, his desiring and sense of desirableness were complete and unhindered by doubts about self-worth. An absolutely harmonious relation to God as 'Father' was accompanied by a confident openness to all people and a certainty of the immediacy of the reign of God as the fulfilment of life for all.

Desire, which at its deepest level is the desire for God, was awakened to new levels in the disciples through their association with Jesus. The possibility of an absolute relatedness to God, issuing in a new life of freedom, was experienced in lives shaped by guilt through participation in original sin. This awakened desire was extinguished by Jesus' death on the Cross. The failure of their hope induced an absolute despair. It was as if God had died.

*Contagion of Jesus; Doing Theology as If It Mattered*, ed. Stephen McCarthy (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2007). 120-141.
[55] Moore, *Let This Mind*. 83.

The experience of the resurrection was a radical re-awakening in the disciples of the previously awakened desire, confronting them with a reality that only God could achieve. They remembered that Jesus had sought to teach them about the fate that awaited him; teaching that disturbed them and had not been understood. They now regarded the Cross as chosen by Jesus and not simply the result of evil done to him. His whole life had headed towards it. Jesus, having a sense of limitless desire through being absolutely desired, had no repression of death. He chose that which threatens us as the ultimate negation of any possibility of meaning or purpose and so has to be repressed. Moore's consideration of this question led to exploration of "the capacity for offered suffering – that is the secret of the crucified".[56] The power of God was no longer seen simply as almighty power but as almighty love, centred in Jesus. The disciples perceived that the eternal life of the risen Jesus was God's intention for them and for all people. A new life can now be experienced, as the gift of the Holy Spirit, into an unlimited hope that transforms the whole of life.

For Moore, therefore, transcendental mystery is related to human consciousness as ultimate value that grounds all other values. Value is first discerned through feelings that may be reflected upon to reach understanding. The relation of Jesus to the Father, in his earthly life, is understood as "a human lesson in what will be the mystery of purely relational personhood. The Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus is the estuary in which this river branches out into the Trinitarian mystery".[57]

While Moore is aware of the need for theory and systematics, his own work takes its stance on the basis that the evidence relevant to any theology is only accessible to the degree that

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[56] Moore, *Let This Mind*. 129.
[57] ———, "Four Steps." 79.

the theologian has been converted. It is desire, and not theories per se, that moves the human subject and fires the imagination through our loves and fears. Moore's basis, therefore, is that theology begins in conversion and is the work of affirming, understanding and communicating the interaction of the story of the theologian (and the theologian's tradition) with the transforming story of Jesus Christ, who is affirmed and understood, within the limits of human understanding, as finality incarnate and "the concrete universal of humanity, crucified and risen from the dead."[58]

Moore's approach has, as would be expected, been criticised as an imaginative projection onto biblical data and, therefore, lacking in 'objectivity'. Such critiques often miss his essential point. He is not attempting to reconstruct or amplify the narrative accounts of the gospels. Since images stimulate insights that produce understanding, Moore uses imagination to gain insight into the mind of the first disciples but imagination is controlled by knowledge of the tradition and its meaning as defined by the ecumenical councils and understood in the history of the Church. As he points out -

> Theological creativity can be two quite distinct and opposite things. It can be the embellishment of a slender and dubious original, or it can be the response to an overwhelming experience of transcendence. And if it is the latter then supernatural faith does give us some idea of what the experience was.

He pointedly concludes his comments with the following lines -

> You tell me that I can't know the minds of men
> And women who were this man's followers.
> Somehow tradition formed itself, and then
> Came down to us, and somehow none the worse.
>
> Faith, though, insists they are knowable
> On whom the truth broke that awakes in me.
> The heart speaks to the heart when both are full
> Of the delight of knowing we are free.
>
> I may be cutting corners, but I fear

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[58] Moore, "Four Steps." 100.

That you in rounding them may not come near. [59]

The self-criticism of possibly "cutting corners" arises because Moore is aware that his theological reflections, while inspired by Lonergan's work on method, would ideally be informed by, and form a part of, a much larger venture implementing method as functional specialization. He is doing what he can to communicate theologically in contemporary terms. His approach is knowingly based on interiority, as the subjectivity operative in theology, and on the understanding that the foundations of theology are in the subject as religiously converted, which gives rise to a new self to be understood. As with all theological reflection, it is the product of the mind of its author, in this case a Benedictine monk with many years experience of reflection on Christian faith and life. Inevitably, the 'data' that he selects for analysis, and the manner of his theological reflection, are influenced by his 'horizon' of meaning and value, constituted over years of thought and prayer within his tradition. The inspiration for his approach is an appreciation of the need for communication in a post-critical simplicity that makes clear the connection between the Christian message and the human situation. Relationship to God through Christ is one of intentional identity created by unconditional love. Christ is the revelation of God and the liberator of our desiring for ultimate loving relation. Connections are made between Christology and a theological anthropology and a limited finite understanding of the transforming fulfilment of human beings is then made possible. In so doing, Moore illustrates what it means to say that theology is "faith seeking understanding" and he bears

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[59]"Review Symposium: Jesus the Liberator of Desire by Sebastian Moore. Three Perspectives," *Horizons* 18, no. 1 (1991). 128 and 129.
Indicative of his stance is his provocative comment in an earlier work - "Anyone who talks of the divine encounter without at least wishing he could write poetry is talking about nothing at all. He is guilty of the supreme conceptualism, offering something apparently alive, which is worse than offering something manifestly dead. He is opening up before the thirsty wanderer the mirage that is the final exacerbation of thirst." Sebastian Moore, *God Is a New Language* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1967). 143-144

witness to an infinite Love, incarnate in Christ and present through the Spirit, always desiring an appropriate moral and intellectual response in human beings.

Consideration of Moore's ('may be cutting corners') approach raises the question of the 'full' implementation of method as functional specialization in the collaborative form broadly outlined by Lonergan.

## *5.10 Questions concerning Implementation of Method*

It is intellectual conversion that opens the possibility of operating from a basis that allows for the implementation of method as a collaborative framework. Arising from the naturally occurring and recurring operations in the human subject, method is trans-cultural and, therefore, potentially able to facilitate collaboration across disciplines, traditions, cultures and religions. As Lonergan recognised, the importance of moral and religious conversion to theology is readily granted but "hesitation will be felt by many when it comes to intellectual conversion. They will feel it is a philosophic issue and that it is not up to theologians to solve it."[60] In his view, despite the initial difficulties involved in attending to the subject as subject, intellectual conversion is essentially simple because what is discovered to be the case is that which spontaneously occurs in human experience. From the age of reason one begins quite naturally to operate on the criteria of sufficient evidence or sufficient reason and it is only as involvement in philosophical questions arises that difficulties begin. Then, as Lonergan states:

> the objectification of what is meant by sufficient evidence may become exceedingly complex, while the objectification of taking a good look is simplicity itself. So one becomes a naïve realist; if one takes that seriously, one becomes an empiricist; if that becomes uncomfortable, one can move on to idealism; then to pragmatism; then to phenomenology. But far less laborious

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[60] "Unity and Plurality" in Lonergan, *3rd Collection*. 248.

than travelling round that circuit is the task of finding out just what sufficient evidence is. I grant that facing that issue calls for some concentration. But enormously more concentration is needed to explore the philosophies that either neglect sufficient evidence or, on the other hand, propose excessive criteria.[61]

In a review and critique of implementations of method, Ivo Coelho concludes that there is a requirement for both 'broad and loose' collaboration and 'strict' collaboration involving intentional teamwork, with the latter essential for dialectics and foundations.[62]  There are no adequate past models for the implementation of method at fourth level consciousness of dialectics and foundations that involve judgments of value issuing in doctrines as that to which one is fully committed.  It is generally agreed that full collaborative implementation of method is a long-term goal.

A matter of fundamental concern for the theologian, as authentic subject in the implementation of method, is the problem of the existential gap between the horizon of the subject and the horizon of the objective field being considered.  In the natural sciences the subject may be 'bracketed' but in theology, or any human science, that is impossible because the subject is directly involved in the data.  Lonergan envisaged implementation of method as requiring a self-appropriation that has a genuine appreciation of the realm of theory, if the contemporary situation is to be adequately addressed and future foreseeable needs met.  His concern was that, while there may be an acknowledgment of theory, often "there is no real grasp of theory of any kind" because there has been no experience of working strictly in the realm of theory and, consequently, "in the subject there is no real

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[61] "Unity and Plurality" in Lonergan, *3rd Collection*. 248.

[62] Ivo Coelho, "Implementations of Lonergan's Method: A Critique," *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* 15, no. 3 (2004). 379-404.  In a further article Coelho insightfully discusses the questions involved in the application of method in Indian theology. Ivo Coelho, "Applying Lonergan's Method: The Case of an Indian Theology," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 22, no. 1 (2004). 1-22.

serious differentiation of consciousness".[63]  To go beyond a merely descriptive (things in relation to us) account to a full explanatory (things in relation to each other) account patently requires such a 'serious' differentiation of consciousness.

Recognition of the high demands on those engaged in the 'full' implementation of method as functional specialization leads to the conclusion that it is a long-term project, to be collaboratively and cumulatively developed over succeeding generations.   Coelho concludes that "while the task of putting Lonergan's ideas into practice is enormous, our job is to do what we can, which involves being intelligent as well as diligent, trusting in the leadership of an emergent probability that works ultimately under the guiding hand of a loving providence."[64]   Trust in a loving providence is the basis and orientation for a theology of hope and of hope for the future of theology.

### 5.11 Conclusions or 'Taking a Stand'

'Foundations' as a functional specialty is the point at which theologians take a stand by identifying basic positions from which theology proceeds to address the contemporary situation.  Taking a stand is a matter of drawing conclusions from the dialectical sifting of the possibilities offered through interpretation, history and fundamentally conflicting understandings.  Identification of basic standpoints will inform understanding of doctrines, the possibilities of systematic theology, and the communication of theology.  Two such

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[63] Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*. 155.

[64] Coelho, "Applying Lonergan's Method." 22. He is partly quoting from a comment by Lonergan about theologians working intelligently and diligently in collaboration and with a sense of direction "under the leadership of emergent probability", "A Response to Fr Dych" in Bernard Lonergan, *Shorter Papers*, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Mansour Robert C. Croken, vol. 20 CWL (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). 300. Emergent probability as a world view is explained in *Insight* and was briefly referred to in Chapter 4 above at 4.6.2 where references to *Insight* are given.

The recently established SGEME [Society for Globally Effective Methods of Evolving] acts as a forum for collaboration on the question of implementation of method as functional specialization in theology and other disciplines. See: http://www.sgeme.org

basic standpoints and the way in which they determine how theology is undertaken have been discussed in this chapter.

Firstly, a stand is taken affirming the priority of understanding to conceptualisation. This leads to the position that objectivity is reached through authentic subjectivity. In chapters two and four above, the basis of the position on the relation of subjectivity and objectivity has been outlined by indicating the conclusions reached by Lonergan in his major works, *Verbum*, *Insight*, and *Method in Theology*. Stated in summary form, the cognitional relation of subject and object is understood as being one of intentional identity. The intelligibility of data grasped in a direct insight is through intelligence in act in the subject. It is not simply a conclusion or deduction. In the moment of insight, the distinction of subject and object has yet to be made. Distinction follows, often immediately, in an act of conceiving that objectifies the content of an insight as an inner word. The conclusion that objectivity is reached through authentic subjectivity is, therefore, the result of understanding that understanding is prior to conceiving. A further conclusion is that 'method', based on the spontaneous operations of the subject, and, therefore, operative whether acknowledged or not, is prior to any results yielded by method.

Coming to know the relation of subject and object, as knower and known, is much more than an examination of an observing subject and an observed object, as held by Paul Tillich. If knowing is through intentional identity and ideas and concepts are formulations of acts of understanding, the subject in coming to know $x$ enters into intentional relation with $x$ and is changed by the effect of becoming a knower of $x$. This applies to everything we come to know, from learning to read, or ride a bicycle, to learning which 'tribe' we belong to and how to regard those who do not. When we come to know something or

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someone, the forming of a new relation effects a change in us.  Becoming a knower of *x* raises the question of what constitutes a responsible attitude towards *x*.

The second basic standpoint outlined in the chapter is related to the first and concerns the priority of religious conversion to formulations of the content of religious belief.  The truth of God's self-revelation is not an objective proposition because it is Reality seeking to draw us into loving relation that will affect all our knowing and deciding.  Because it is God's quest for us, it is not a question of the human subject discovering an unknown.  It is, rather, the reception through religious conversion of the fulfilment of the desire for self-transcendence inherent in the human subject.  It is, therefore, a relation enabled solely by the gift of God's boundless love.

Faith is understood as knowledge of ultimate value received through being in love with God that may be characterised as Pascal's knowledge of the heart.  Just as understanding and love require expression in words as well as decisions and deeds, conversion and faith require and find linguistic expression in formulations of religious belief, and performative expression through decisions to act on all that has come to be known through being in love with God.

Theological foundations, therefore, are in the subjective reality of the human relation to God that is made possible through the gift of God's love.  The objective realities of formulations of religious belief and practice are the result of reflection on the meaning of the subjective reality of being related by love to God, as revealed in Jesus Christ by the Spirit, witnessed to in Scripture, and believed and understood by the Church.  The theologian's task is to relate the results of that work to the contemporary situation by

clarifying understanding of its meaning in the present. Theological 'foundations', therefore, are in the human subject and refer to the basic standpoints taken that influence a theologian's work.

From these basic standpoints, it follows that God cannot be regarded as the summit of religious attainment as though the concrete reality of religion and religious belief constitutes the foundation of faith that, diligently attended to and acted upon, can lead to the religious and moral heights of love of God and neighbour. No method or amount of formation, by itself, can lead to such a transformation. Relation to God is, rather, an undeserved gift received through on-going conversion in the down-to-earth neediness of suffering and sin. Religious conversion, as transformation by boundless love, issues in an on-going desire for, and call to, absolute authenticity. As such, it becomes, like the light of intelligence itself, an internal source of judgment of ultimate value, providing a norm that finds its form of expression in the tradition in which the conversion occurred. In this life, conversion involves continual withdrawal from unauthenticity and assurance of pardon and restoration for failings. Authentic religious belief and practice will reflect that reality and avoid all that distracts attention from the centre of Christian faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Rather than attending to the way that understanding occurs and knowledge of truth is affirmed, theology with conceptualist presuppositions either regards foundations as contained in definitive statements or concludes that no such foundation is possible. In the former case, an insistence on holding to finite truth as if it were infinite may contribute to the misuse of authority, whether that be understood as centred in the Church, Scripture, tradition or experience. An understanding of an infallible Church or Bible, vouched for by

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historical proof, attested to in the experience of many, will be seen as foundational. In contrast, taking a stand on the priority of understanding, it is clear that definitions are not, in themselves, the real: they are more or less adequate formulations of an understanding of the real.[65] While vital to the communication of knowledge, they are always the product of a particular time and place and, therefore, open to the possibility of further understanding in response to further questions. It is also clear that not all further questions can be answered by deduction from a previous answer. It may often be that today's questions can be directly related to previous questions, so that many answers are already in the tradition, but today's questions may arise from knowledge unavailable in the past. The dominance of conceptualism has led to the Church often being fearfully slow to recognise the need for adaptation to advances in scientific and historical knowledge, because concepts do not change, only understanding changes. Change and development occur only in the actual and concrete and that is precisely what is omitted in a conceptualist approach. It is not enough to recite a formula. Religious meaning has to be elucidated in the context of a concrete and particular situation and thus mediated to a culture.

The opposite conclusion to which a conceptualist foundational stance may lead is the impossibility of finite objective truth about God as an object of religious belief. Theology is reduced to reflection on mystical experience through symbols and their narrative extension in mythology and, in the extreme, to a pure subjectivism in which faith and reason are separated. Everyone can then hold their 'truths' (little 't' - that are 'true for me')

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[65] Only things in themselves are realities. The human subject is impassioned by the experience and knowing of concrete realities rather than by definitions or formulations. As Newman stated "No one, I say, will die for his own calculations: he dies for realities." John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979). 89. Compare Lonergan "What is wanted is something existential – real apprehension and real assent to truth". Lonergan, *Topics in Education*. 64.

in relation to belief in God and, if it is considered necessary, can opt to construct, adapt, or select a framework of understanding, despite a prevailing suspicion of unifying or comprehensive approaches. Questions of Truth (big 'T') as objective truth concerning religious belief and values are regarded as beyond the capacity of human beings and unnecessary, or as formulations that maintain the power and control of an elite. Conceptualism, therefore, tends either to claim too much for definitive expressions of belief or to deny their necessity.

Method, as advocated by Lonergan, begins from the concrete and particular, from people as they are, operating intentionally as conscious subjects. What actually moves people is concrete lived experience. Experiences of love and goodness on the one hand, and hatred, apathy and evil on the other, have decisive significance for human life. From such a perspective, expressions of meaning and value are constitutive components of human living. The common meanings and commitments that constitute communities are perceived to be products of development of understanding. They are understood as always in process, subject to revision and further development, and open to possible distortion and misunderstanding. Such an approach is founded in the concrete because it reflects the dynamic structure of the operating subject's consciousness. Transcendental method, as an expression of that structure, provides a trans-cultural basis for understanding and evaluating expressions of religious meaning and value.

It is an approach that corresponds with contemporary science through concern with that which is particular, concrete, contingent and historical. Scientific discoveries are not made by deduction from eternal and necessary principles. Only after investigation of the particular, concrete, contingent and historical can conclusions be drawn about that which

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may be formulated as a 'law' of nature or a necessary principle. Scientific achievements in the development of understanding in many fields witness to this being a well-founded approach. Developments in the understanding of probability mean that it is now possible to understand matters beyond the horizon of earlier science. Such achievements indicate the realisation of something normative for human understanding in scientific method. This does not mean that scientific method is the only reliable means of coming to know but it is to recognise that insight into the intelligibility of data precedes the formulation of concepts and theories. What is basic and common in the process of the cumulative development of human understanding over time is the dynamism of the human spirit toward self-transcendence, operating immanently as the desire to understand truth and reality, to enjoy and celebrate the good and worthwhile, and to love and be loved.

Lonergan bemoaned the separation of natural and systematic theology in the Catholic educational system that prevailed for centuries up to his time because it prevented "the presentation of systematics as the Christian prolongation of what man can begin to know by his own native powers."[66] He identified the underlying issues as -

> the transition from the abstract logic of classicism to the concreteness of method. On the former view what is basic is proof. On the latter what is basic is conversion. Proof appeals to an abstraction named right reason. Conversion transforms the concrete individual to make him capable of grasping not merely conclusions but principles as well.
>
> Again, the issue is one's notion of objectivity. If one considers logical proof to be basic, one wants objectivity that is independent of the concrete existing subject. But while objectivity reaches what is independent of the concrete existing subject, objectivity itself is not reached by what is independent of the subject. On the contrary, objectivity is reached through the self-transcendence of the concrete existing subject, and the fundamental forms of self-transcendence are intellectual, moral and religious conversion. To attempt to ensure objectivity apart from self-transcendence only generates illusions.[67]

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[66] Lonergan, *Method*. 337.
[67] ———, *Method*. 338.

This passage summarises the issues and conclusions central to the thesis. Questions about the meaning of formulations of religious belief presuppose a faith to be understood and, therefore, religious conversion. They can be both fascinating and disturbing because conversion has intellectual and moral dimensions, as well as religious, and cannot be assumed as if it were the rational conclusion of an established position. Conversion is foundational to theology as an on-going calling toward authenticity through the re-ordering of priorities and the possible revision of understanding. Being a theologian is to be an explorer committed to authenticity in attempting to piece together, in collaboration with others, the meaning of that which is experienced, given in Scripture, inherited from tradition and taught by the Church. Theology has to be engaged in dialogue with the contemporary culture and theologians have to be clear about the basis of their own contribution in reflecting on what is believed and can be coherently understood about God and the world in the light of Christian faith.

# Chapter Six

# Conclusions

## *6.1 Refocus of the Original Question*

This thesis has contrasted intellectualist and conceptualist approaches to theology in order to address, from the standpoint of Christian faith, the question with which the thesis began: How to understand the human conditions of the possibility of relation to God? It has become a question of the significance of 'conversion', in its threefold form as intellectual, moral, and religious, for theological understanding and knowledge.

From the horizon that intellectual conversion makes possible, threefold conversion relates to three modes of self-transcendence. Conversion denotes the self-appropriation of knowing oneself as intentionally oriented toward cognitional and moral self-transcendence, and as experiencing the fulfilment of self-transcendence through religious conversion as response to the Gift of God's love. Religious conversion, as the fulfilment of the orientation towards self-transcendence, places moral and cognitional self-transcendence within a universal context of boundless understanding and love. This involves total transformation while including and preserving in that new context all that has been authentically realised as good, true and real.[1]

Little direct attention is given to conversion in 'academic' theology because its questions generally address the meaning and relevance of formulations of Christian religious belief from a perspective informed by, or arguing for, an approach that is understood as ensuring objectivity. The question of the relation of subjective and objective in theology is one that

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[1] Lonergan conceived their relation as one of sublation as outlined in Chapter 4, section 4.7, pp166/167 above. *Method,* 241.

does not arise if its answer is presupposed by the method of approach. Theology centred on experience is likely to be considered 'spiritual theology', with an implication that its conclusions are 'soft', or less rigorously objective, because of a presumed dependence on subjective considerations.[2] It may even be demoted to 'spirituality', now a largely indeterminate term used loosely to describe human orientation towards self-transcendence and how it may be attended to and practiced with some understanding. If spirituality is not simply distinguished but divorced from theology, any possibility of holding 'mind' and 'heart' together is lost, to the detriment of both.

Karl Rahner gave eloquent expression to the limitations inherent in reasoning toward knowledge:

> Knowledge seems more like a kind of pain-killing drug that I have to take repeatedly against the boredom and desolation of my heart. And no matter how faithful I may be to it, it can never really cure me. All it can give me is words and concepts, which perform the go-between's service of expressing and interpreting reality to me, but can never still my heart's craving for the reality itself, for true life and true possession. I shall never be cured until all reality comes streaming like an ecstatic, intoxicating melody into my heart.[3]

To describe a desire for fulfilment that is beyond the cognitional self-transcendence of knowing is to give expression to the desire for self-transcendence as fulfilled in loving relation to all reality. For Christian faith, it is religious conversion, as the Gift of God's love, that evokes the affirmation of knowing that God is Love. The 'spiritual' is integral to the theological. God's self-revelation is not merely a communication of information. Revelation is identical with its content, which, in the experience of boundless love, identifies God's self-revelation as Love, and being in love with God as the total fulfilment

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[2] As indicated in chapter 5, section 5.9, with regard to the theological reflection of Sebastian Moore on the first disciples experience of the Resurrection.
[3] Karl Rahner, *Encounters with Silence*, trans. James M. Demke (London: Sands & Co, 1960). 29.

of intentional consciousness. Ultimately, it is God whom we desire to know and love because, intentionally, our desire to know and love is unrestricted. It is, therefore, not a matter of *either* theology *or* spirituality but of understanding how theological method can attain *both* correct understanding of objective truth *and* be founded in the transforming experience of religious conversion.

The originating question of the thesis presupposed the recognition of religious believing as a knowing that involves commitment on a level deeper than mere assent to the content of propositions. Since forms of expressions of Christian religious belief refer to a content that is always beyond any definitive expression, it is crucial that the manner in which they are taught, defended, or questioned, reflects that reality. It is inadequate for theology to deal solely with propositions and argue to necessary conclusions in a manner that excludes consideration of the impenetrable 'mystery' of its connection with the subject through love and of the here and now particular. Pure reasoning may reach knowledge of ideas *about* God but is unable to address the question of knowledge *of* God. It is the intimate relation between authentic 'knowing cognitively about' God and the gift of 'actual knowledge of' God as Love that has become the focus of the thesis.

### 6.2  *Method according to Lonergan*

Approach to the original question requires recalling the major contention of the thesis that theological method as understood, explained, advocated, and incarnated by Bernard Lonergan, provides a means of enabling the subject to understand the relation of attaining objective knowledge of reality and the truly good with the transforming effect of religious conversion. The approach to inquiry is through the inquirer.

As outlined in chapter two, Lonergan's work had an historical antecedent in the works of Thomas Aquinas, particularly in the latter's distinction between *intelligere* and *dicere* in the procession of an inner word in the mind. It is, however, essential to grasp that Lonergan's position, as traced in chapter four, is that knowledge is the result of the operation of intelligence in acts of understanding that are experienced and can themselves be understood as the structure of cognition. It is knowledge of that which happens to be the case and is to be distinguished from understandings that form a set of necessary conclusions derived from theoretical presuppositions. Method in theology, therefore, is based on knowing that an understanding of data of consciousness is the basis of knowledge of our knowing.

From that basis, and the standpoint of Christian faith, it follows that acts of understanding are human acts and a participation in the operation of the Spirit, whether the latter is acknowledged or not. Acts of understanding leading to judgments of fact and value that increase knowledge and create and promote the good of true value are understood to be acts that are also a reception. The common descriptive phrase "it dawned on me" for the occurrence of an insight is an indication of a usually unacknowledged dimension that may be understood as an 'act' that is also a 'being moved', as identified by Aquinas.[4] The intelligibility of data grasped in insight is through an act of intelligence. It is not a conclusion or a deduction. In the act of understanding, the subject and the object to be understood become one intentionally and, in the moment of insight, the distinction between subject and object has yet to be made. The distinction follows in the act of conceiving the inner word that objectifies the content of the insight.

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[4] See the discussion on *pati* and the resultant understanding of *operatio* and *actio* discussed in chapter 2 (2.8.3) above.

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It is from that basis that 'method' is understood as being prior to the results yielded by method. 'Interiority' is discovered to be a realm of meaning; the reality of 'mind' emerges in the change effected by the inner movement from presence *to* self to knowledge *of* self. Such conclusions can be verified only through attention to, and reflection and judgment upon, the experience of coming to understanding and knowledge, as Lonergan demonstrates at length in *Insight*. The invitation is to explore and consider the possibility of such self-knowledge and he is acutely aware that the position reached is profoundly counter-cultural, because generally accepted understandings of objectivity and its relation to subjectivity eliminate any such possibility. For Lonergan, insight into insights is the crucial first step toward understanding cognition that, once affirmed and appropriated, becomes self-knowledge. This forms the basis of the many implications drawn in *Insight* regarding epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, belief in God, and, therefore, for theology and its method.

From such an intellectualist position, the general basic conclusion is drawn that any attempt to reach objectivity that neglects self-transcending subjectivity is likely to result in fallacies. It is a conclusion particularly applicable in regard to theology as seeking understanding of the human relation to God, of how that which is naturally oriented to self-transcendence is also oriented to the Transcendent.

### 6.3  The Way of Teaching and the Way of Discovery

There are two 'ways' in which the human subject comes to know objective truth and reality. Immanently generated knowledge and knowing through belief may be identified as two forms of movement comprising the ways of discovery and of teaching.

The way of discovery is the way in which further knowledge is discovered through inquiry. It describes the dynamic operating through the levels of consciousness, from experience to questions and insights, critical reflection, knowledge, deliberation, decision, and action. They self-constitute as a dynamic structure operating as an upward vector that makes possible human achievement and development. The vast majority of knowledge acquired by human subjects, however, is by means of the way of teaching. Human living and learning takes place in a communal context in which a store of acquired wisdom and knowledge is communicated through families, schools, churches, and the like. The dynamic of the way of teaching is downward from authorities and principles to conclusions and their implications. Understandings and requirements are taught that 'make sense' of experience, satisfy curiosity, direct hopes and desires, and are normally communicated in a manner that takes into account the capacity to understand. Communication of faith and its meaning, by such means as religious beliefs and moral imperatives, may be received and accepted as the gift of heritage. Both 'ways' are operative and necessary in life and in theology.

The approach to inquiry through the inquirer advocated by Lonergan, is dependent on an understanding of 'mind' that can only be reached by way of discovery, through inquiry into the experience of insights leading to a position where judgments can be made concerning the relation of subjectivity to objective truth and reality. His conclusions concerning the role of acts of understanding in reaching knowledge, as constituting the way of discovery, form the basic position from which further inquiry leads to understanding of the relation of the way of discovery to the way of teaching. This thesis has sought to demonstrate that Lonergan's understanding of understanding, applied as method, "does not treat of objects

without taking into account the corresponding operations of the subject and it does not treat of the subject's operations without taking into account the corresponding objects."[5] Only through an understanding of 'mind' that has become self-knowledge can such a clear distinction and relation be made. It is a position that is no longer confined or determined by the consequences of assuming prevailing ideas about the relation of subjectivity and objectivity. Discovery of 'mind' as centred in something beyond understanding, because it is the provider of understanding, is an experience of intellectual conversion. While that conversion may be expressed as conversion from 'conceptualism', or from a narrow rationalism or some form of idealism, it is primarily a conversion to a basic understanding of the human relation to a universe of being. Insights, the capacity to reason, and desire for loving relation, are understood as gifts of creation through which human self-transcendence is intended and enabled. In this, a fundamental orientation of the subject toward the mystery of absolute transcendence may be discerned.

There is, therefore, an in-built expectation of something 'required' in being human that is the source of the sense of the dignity of human life. It is not something that is self-designated, because the capacity for self-transcendence that intends the true and desires the good and fulfilment through being in love, is constitutive of the human subject. We cease to be human without it and become less than fully human if it is disregarded. The human subject, therefore, is not only rational but also desirous, carrying an expectation, in the form of an intentional orientation, which gives dignity, meaning and significance to self in relation to others, our world and to God.

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[5] Lonergan, *3rd Collection*. 141.

Access to the realm of interiority is necessary if the essential connection between subjectivity and the objectivity of knowledge that comes through faith is to be clearly articulated and commended. It is not a question of promoting subjectivity over objectivity, or inner 'spiritual' experience over Church authority, or Spirit over Word, but of understanding both as necessary and ideally belonging together as the ways of discovery and teaching. The fundamental reorientation involved in 'intellectual conversion', that leads to self-knowledge and discovery of the realm of interiority, makes it possible to acknowledge that the persistent inner longing experienced in questioning and desiring is a search for a fulfilment that can only be satisfied in God. The human experience of the infinite love of God is pure Gift. It is not a possession, cannot be earned, is not subject to human control, and the idea of it cannot be 'reasoned' into existence or reality by thought. It is through infinite Love that the subject is transformed to the state of being in love and to faith as that which is known through love. It is given objective verbal expression in religious beliefs affirmed as true by the community of faith concerning God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh and the Gift of the Spirit. An assent is made to truth that is objectively known through religious conversion and as requiring and expecting moral conversion.

If the notion of a fundamental subject-object split is accepted and Christian faith is mediated solely through concepts in a way of teaching, a gap is created between the subject and the meaning and content of expressions of religious belief. The relation of the subject to faith is one of substance, as an object constituting part of a collective such as the Church or the human race, rather than as subject. Complete dependence on the way of teaching, with only a 'filtered' apprehension of the way of discovery through participation as part of

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a collective, may result in corporate Church activity and worship becoming very important while the possibility of growth in understanding of faith is severely limited.

## *6.4 Human Knowing and Religious Belief*

The basic connection between human knowing and religious belief, as expressions of the content of faith on the one hand and as resulting from religious conversion on the other, is grasped by understanding their origin in the experience of the subject. The propositional expression of the meaning of faith in words arises from the necessity of declaring and affirming that the Gift of God's love is of ultimate value and the complete fulfilment of the human desire for the true, the real, the good. The priority of understanding to conceptual formulation, of love to faith, and of faith to religious belief, is based on understanding that the foundations of cognitional structure, faith, and theology are in the experience of the human subject that may be understood and known as data of consciousness. Formulations expressing an understanding of cognitional structure within subjectivity, or faith expressed as religious belief, are based on understandings of experience that are judged to be true. While necessarily taking the form of propositions or theory, their foundation is in the experience of the subject. Truths of faith cannot be regarded as objective information that may be packaged and transmitted from one mind to another as external universal truths requiring assent and conformity because they are reasonable. The meaning and fulfilment of life is not a proposition but a way of living that becomes better known in the living of it. Adoption of an approach to theological communication that omits the dynamic unity of its content to lived experience of conversion, or of its necessity or desirability, leads naturally to the common negative perception of the 'dogma' (pejoratively understood) of an 'institutional' religion.

Lonergan differentiates lived religion and theology within their dynamic unity because many questions require theoretical specialization in order to address them adequately. Development in theology, as in any other discipline, is through specialization but "the separateness of theology is a withdrawal that always intends and in its ultimate stage effects a return".[6] It is the task of the eighth functional speciality, communications, to enable the sharing of the meaning of lived faith as cognitive, constitutive, and effective meaning and it is through communication that community is constituted.

Since the origin of faith is in the gift of God's love, priority has to be accorded to the inner gift of the Spirit, who makes possible assent to the objective truth of the self-revelation of God in the Word made flesh and the role of the Church in mediating faith to a culture. Religious beliefs are expressions of the objective content of faith. It has been argued here that forms of expression of religious belief require authenticity, both of the tradition and of the human subject, through commitment to on-going conversion to the gift of unconditional love.[7] Lonergan's position on interiority, the realm in which the Spirit operates, enables a clear understanding that authentic assent to the objective truth of religious belief necessarily involves cognitional and moral levels of human self-transcendence. Authentic religious conversion and beliefs, therefore, will promote moral and intellectual conversion and authentic theological communication will promote the Church in an on-going process of self-constitution and a self-correcting process of becoming.[8]

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[6] Lonergan, *Method*. 140.

[7] See chapter 5, section 5.2, pp224-232.

[8] Fred Lawrence has demonstrated that Lonergan shared the concerns that have prompted contemporary questions and that his thought is most helpful in addressing them. By taking his stand on threefold conversion he was able to avoid the dilemma of having to choose between a form of 'fundamentalism' and an agnostic pluralism. Frederick G. Lawrence, "The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Postmodern Concern for the Other", 173-211 and "The Human Good and Christian Conversation", 248-268. In *Communication and*

That the life of every human being is to be regarded as dependent upon, and open to influence by the Spirit of God who desires the salvation of all people, may be held simply as a matter of faith.   Questions about understanding may arise but ought not be imposed. The influence of 'spirit', as experienced in the operation of intelligence and the sensitivity of loving relationships, reflects a God-given desire for authentic fulfilment that remains a possibility even in the context of other influences, which distract and distort that desire.

It is also sadly and clearly evident that professions of belief in 'God', as assent to propositions about 'God', provides no guarantee of openness to being intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving.  Indeed, perversely, religion can lead to bigotry and fanaticism that may eventually result in such evil that nothing less than invocation of the will of a 'God' can serve to 'justify' it.  Multiple historical and recent examples come readily to mind.  The question of God, and the way that answers are sought and provided, is a matter of great importance because absolutes or answers to questions of ultimate value inevitably issue in decisions and deeds, for good or evil.

It is also noteworthy that there are many who do not profess belief in 'God' who are attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving.  From the standpoint of Christian faith, they are relying upon, and operating in accord with, that which God intends for human life without religious belief in 'God'.  They are a salutary reminder that believers tend to be aware of the dangers of the misuse of reason without religious belief but can disregard the dangers of the misuse of faith and the consequent rationalizations that often

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become a factor contributing to reasons for non-belief.[9]   Accordingly, the question of the relation of Christian faith to other religions, and those who profess no religion, is a question to which Christian theology must give more attention, in the context of the study of history and world religions.

It follows that catechetical instruction that amounts to nothing more than indoctrination is obviously unauthentic.  It will take place authentically in a communal context as part of the process of handing on the story of God's loving relation to human beings and at a level that engages with the experience of the subject.  In such a context the outer objective word of a tradition can be at one with the inner word of God's love.  The manner and the context of communication of the meaning of faith, as expressed in religious beliefs, require an understanding of the content of the faith as well as a thorough appreciation of culture and language.  Authentic communication requires a willingness to listen and speak.  The quality of listening is crucial because it requires openness to the possibility of further understanding.  Any conviction of already possessing the definitive truth can make real listening very difficult as 'conversation' is easily debased into an opportunity to speak 'the truth' into a situation from which, it is assumed, nothing can be learned.  Authoritarian monologue, by itself, is inadequate.

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[9] For example, Benedict XVI, in a message discussing the meaning of faith, said "Believe deeply that the encounter of faith and reason enables us to find ourselves. But all too often reason falters in the face of self-interest and the lure of profit, and is forced to regard the latter as the ultimate criterion."  BenedictXVI, "In This Court of the Unknown God,"  http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1347271?eng=y.
The question of whether, or in what way, faith might falter 'in the face of self-interest' was, of course, not raised. Yet recent serious difficulties experienced by the Church have stemmed from putting perceived self-interest above the interests of victims of abuse. If rationalism is having too much confidence in 'reason' while neglecting the subject and the concrete, there is also a fideism that, likewise neglecting the subject and the concrete, becomes a distortion of Christian faith that prompts and encourages unbelief.

On the same basis, objectively true statements and correct decisions require that the context and manner in which they are reached, and the data that is attended to in their being made, is openly in clear focus. If, in the process of arriving at decisions, there is only a selective listening rather than real communication, secrecy rather than transparency, statements and decisions will be regarded with suspicion as an imposition. Appeal to an external objective norm, such as scripture, tradition or authority, is insufficient because a position can be truly accepted only when it can be affirmed as truth from within, in accord with consciousness as conscience. Conscience, of course, needs to be informed but an informed conscience cannot be equated simply with being conformed to particular presuppositions and understandings. Such a position might be regarded as deriving from Enlightenment thinking but is, in fact, an affirmation of two interdependent realities: firstly, the priority of the gift of the Spirit in religious conversion and subsequent assent to the truth of religious belief, and, secondly, the gift of intelligence that enables immanently generated knowledge. They operate together within interiority enabling the 'natural' operation of intelligence to assent fully, with the understanding of the heart, to objective truth about the reality of God as Love. The priority of that inner process must always be respected and taken into account.

### 6.5  Hope for the Future

Significant consequences follow for theological reflection on the Church and its approach to mission and pastoral practice. The history of the Church over two thousand years has been one of adaptation in order to meet the changing demands of addressing new situations and different cultures. Many advances in scientific or historical understanding have been slowly recognized and accommodated, despite original opposition. Misgivings were often

expressed in formulaic reasoning based on an 'already known' that was in the process of being exposed as inadequate or erroneous. There can be little doubt that further adaptation and change will be necessary, as a continuing re-formation in response to continuing advances in human knowledge and evolving cultural change. The Church is not above and beyond history but in it, with a mission that requires communication within a culture.

In summoning the Second Vatican Council, John XXIII recognized a need for the Church to be open to renewal and possible change, as part of the on-going conversion necessary for the authenticity of its mission in the present. While it is understandable that authorities tend to be cautious and resistant to change, the question of facilitating the Church's mission, in the manner envisaged by the 'spirit' in which the Council was summoned, requires openness to a possible restructuring of processes and allocation of resources.[10] The Christian message is not mono-cultural and does not belong only in time past. Indeed, its catholicity is expressed in history only through the capacity to relate contextually at any time in all human situations.

The present demands and opportunities of addressing different cultures or multi-cultural contexts requires creative adaptations and a pluralism of forms of expression so that the good news can be authentically affirmed by many from within their own culture. The gradual movement since Vatican II, towards increasing centralization of decision-making and retreat to the past, can be regarded as prompted by fear that does not trust the self-correcting process of learning through reflection and action energized by the Spirit.

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[10] In regarding the Church as becoming a "fully conscious process of self-constitution", Lonergan points out that it is possible "only when theology unites itself with all other relevant branches of human studies". Lonergan, *Method*. 364.

Correctives are always necessary in staying on course but they may be distinguished from defensive retreat to a supposed safe harbour of the past. It prompts the reflection that if, since the age of rule by an Emperor and his Court, there has been any historical development in structures providing the good of social order, it is reasonable to suggest that the main features contributing to such advances should be considered for adoption by the Church. It is not that the Church ought to be modelled on western democracy but neither does it have be modelled on the Court of Imperial Rome. A salient characteristic evident in history is that societies are most creative and vigorous when the expression of new ideas is safeguarded and they are organized to receive and consider the unexpected and, perhaps, initially unpleasant. The Church's self-understanding as an on-going self-constituting and self-correcting process of becoming in response to both Word and Spirit requires the freedom and openness that permits authentic communication. A need for greater transparency of decision-making and for genuine conversation, which does not refuse to discuss difficult questions, is clearly evident.

There can be no doubt that every realm of meaning and the many varieties of common sense must be appropriately employed in the mediation of faith to a culture. At the level of the communication of faith, the starting point will always be the experience of the Gift of God as the fulfilment of human life, rather than doctrinal formulations, religious practices, or propositions about the sacredness of life and derived moral imperatives. Connection at the level of lived experience with that which yearns for and recognises the good of true value and the 'spiritual' is essential. It is the human originating source, without which understanding and authentic assent to formulations of belief and Church practice is not possible. At the same time, the necessity of being informed and directed by scripture and

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tradition, as the voice of the accumulated wisdom of the past must be affirmed. The wisdom or otherwise of theological reflection will be revealed in that which is selected from the tradition as being relevant and applicable to a present situation. Every standpoint taken in the present is the result of such a process of selection, of seeking understanding of Word through dependence on Spirit.

A world of continually increasing communication and interaction between cultures and civilizations, indicates a pressing need for more understanding between religions. The diversity of religions is an on-going part of the human situation and the exploitation of religion for purposes of power through violence requires a religious solution to provide the basis for social or political harmony. Transcendental method, as advocated by Bernard Lonergan, provides a trans-cultural basis for enabling the development of further understanding between religions by being based on the universal human norms of the necessity of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. It allows for a movement to that which is prior to outer conflicting statements about beliefs and a focus on the meaning of religious experience, with 'meaning' understood as cognitive but also extending to the effective, constitutive, and communicative functions of meaning. The importance of being able to be religious 'inter-religiously', for the future well being of the world and all its people, is something that can hardly be overestimated.[11]

In summary, this thesis has attempted to describe how two approaches to faith and theology, which easily fall apart, can and must be held together. From the beginnings of Christian history, there has been tension between the enthusiasm of 'spirit' led movements

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[11] Bede Griffiths OSB and William Johnston SJ come to mind as notable exemplars indicating possible ways of being authentically and 'inter-religiously' Christian.

concerned with the immediate relevance of Christian faith and the necessity of an objective word, expressing a true finite understanding of infinite Reality known through faith, by which such 'spirits' may be tested. Theologically, it concerns questions about the relation of reason and faith, of 'Word' and 'Spirit' as processions in God and in relation to 'Church.'

Lonergan's understanding of understanding provides a basis for an approach to such questions in which understanding the connection between subjectivity and objectivity provides the basis for theological method that is able to take account of the general and the particular and not one without the other. The capacities of the human mind for knowing and loving are understood as gifts in creation and open to complete fulfilment through the gift of God's love in thinking that loves and loving that thinks. The question of how the created order makes humanly possible the reception of the gift of the infinite love of God has been at the heart of the thesis.

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