

# METHOD

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## LONERGAN AND RAHNER ON THE NATURAL DESIRE TO SEE GOD

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THIS PAPER COMPARES Karl Rahner's (1904-1984) theology of the supernatural existential with Bernard Lonergan's (1904-1984) articulation of obediential potency. There can be no doubt that Rahner made significant contributions to Catholic theology in the twentieth century, and on the nature/grace question he did move in the direction of escaping the older *duplex ordo* way of thinking.<sup>1</sup> However, Lonergan had at his disposal an understanding of world order which allowed him to posit the very thing that Rahner's position would not allow – a natural human desire for a supernatural end.<sup>2</sup> He proposed what he called a 'vertical finality' directing concrete things toward an end beyond the proportions of their nature. This notion allowed Lonergan to speak of 'obediential potency' in a unique way that avoided the problems of the post-Reformation theologians who, in his estimation, had failed to understand Aquinas adequately and who had thus set up the problematic as it had been taken up by Rahner and

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1 The twentieth-century discussion of the issue was prompted by the conclusion to Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel: Études historiques*, (Paris: Aubier, 1946). This conclusion is available in English translation as Document 1 (pp.368-380) of David M. Coffey, "Some Resources for Students of *La nouvelle théologie*," *Philosophy and Theology* 11, no. 2 (1999): 367-398. See also Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad, 1998). Karl Rahner's response to de Lubac's position was "Eine Antwort," *Orientierung* 14 (1950): 141-145, in which he outlined his concern that de Lubac's position threatened the gratuity of grace. This article was republished, with a few minor changes, as "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," *Theological Investigations I*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, pages 297-317 (New York: Crossroad, 1982). It is here that the theorem of the 'supernatural existential' first makes its appearance.

2 This position was first outlined in a treatise, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum* (translated by Michael Shields at the Lonergan Research Institute, Toronto, 1992; *College de L'Immacule Conception*, Montreal, 1946), composed for a course on grace that Lonergan was teaching [hereafter abbreviated DES].

the *nouvelle théologie*.<sup>3</sup> In his later work, even though he moved away from the earlier scholastic terminology of his earlier works, the notion of vertical finality can still be seen in Lonergan's explication of the levels of conscious intentionality and their interrelation with one another as found in *Insight*<sup>4</sup> and *Method in Theology*.<sup>5</sup>

Work directly comparing Rahner's supernatural existential with Lonergan's notion of obediential potency has for the most part not been forthcoming.<sup>6</sup> Knowledge of Lonergan's early theology of grace is largely confined to what one might call dedicated Lonergan scholars and was essentially absent from the Rahner/*nouvelle théologie* conversation. J. Michael Stebbins' work on Lonergan's understanding of grace before 1950 was of immeasurable help in this endeavor but, despite its value, the work dismisses Rahner's supernatural existential in a rather cursory manner without the in-depth comparison being attempted here.<sup>7</sup>

Our examination will begin by moving through Lonergan's understanding of the nature/grace relationship. First, we will examine his early position in two parts. Initially, we will see the basic position as presented in *De ente supernaturali*; then, we will examine another early treatise of Lonergan's that shows his understanding of how his position would manifest in the concrete. Second, we will briefly present Rahner's notion of the supernatural existential, relying principally on four points he outlined in his article, "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace." Finally, we will compare more directly the two thinkers' positions, revealing both a similarity and a significant difference.

### 1. LONERGAN'S CHRISTIAN UNIVERSE

Lonergan came to his early understanding of grace as he sought to

3 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, CWL 18, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 348-349 and 354-355.

4 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, CWL 3, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

5 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

6 The single example of which I am aware is Chapter 5 of Neil Ormerod's *Method, Meaning, and Revelation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), although his treatment falls within a larger context and is not focused on the issue.

7 J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), xviii.



understand St. Thomas' notion of the Christian universe,<sup>8</sup> and in doing so he worked within the framework of scholastic terminology. Still, he was critical of much of post-Reformation theology's response to the nature/grace problem, and he used a fresh interpretation of Thomist thought on the matter to outline a more nuanced and differentiated position on the issue.

### 1.1 Lonergan's use of 'Obediential Potency'

Lonergan's fundamental methodological move is the rejection of what he calls an essentialism that "precludes the possibility of natural aspiration to a supernatural goal."<sup>9</sup> This essentialism conceives of natures as logically and ontologically prior to world-orders.<sup>10</sup> World-order, then, results from the juxtaposition of finite natures and their exigences. Thus, world-order is derivative<sup>11</sup> and consists of two elements – a necessary part composed of finite natures and their exigences, and a contingent part composed of anything beyond the necessary.<sup>12</sup> This is the ground of the *duplex ordo* system, in which the universe is constructed "of a series of non-communicating strata" that arise from successive levels of natures and exigences.<sup>13</sup> The only relation between these levels is that of non-repugnance, and such a relation constitutes 'obediential potency' in this essentialist *duplex ordo* view.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, Lonergan describes his alternative as an existentialist position.<sup>15</sup> He reverses the foregoing essentialist presuppositions; rather than world order being derivative and finite natures being primary, world order is primary and finite natures are derivative. The universe is not structured in a series of static strata, but in a series of levels that are dynamically oriented in an "upward" fashion. Thus, finite natures are subordinate to world-order,

8 J. Michael Stebbins, "Bernard Lonergan's Early Theology of Grace: A Commentary on *De Ente Supernaturali*" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 1990), abstract.

9 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "The Natural Desire to See God," *Collection*, CWL 4, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, pages 84-95 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 84. See also Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 171.

10 Ibid. 84. See also Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 171.

11 Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 171.

12 Lonergan, "Natural Desire," 84.

13 Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 348-349.

14 Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 172.

15 Lonergan, "Natural Desire," 86. See also Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage," *Collection*, CWL 4, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, pages 16-53 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 21.



and within world-order, lower natures are subordinate to higher natures.<sup>16</sup> This allows him to use both 'supernatural' and 'obediential potency' in a different way than the essentialists he critiques.

His use of 'supernatural' rests largely on his understanding of world order.<sup>17</sup> In that understanding, there are points of discontinuity in the universe resulting from the emergence of higher intelligibilities that cannot be accounted for completely in terms of lower intelligibilities. These higher intelligibilities sublate lower grades of being and orient them to higher ends.<sup>18</sup> Lower grades of being are therefore that out of which higher grades of being are formed and they have the intrinsic possibility of being integrated into the higher.<sup>19</sup>

To illustrate: an atom is of a lower level than a molecule, because a molecule integrates atoms and orients them to an end beyond the end of atoms *as atoms* – now they have the end of a molecule. Further, molecules are likewise integrated as chemicals. Once organized as chemicals, molecules no longer have only a molecular end; they behave as a chemical. Chemicals are then integrated as organelles, with a corresponding change in ends. Organelles are integrated as cells, cells as tissues, tissues as organs, organs as systems, systems as a body. A body is then sublated by the psychic processes of living, and those psychic processes are, in turn, sublated by the processes of intelligence at work.

This is the fundamental point for understanding Lonergan's notion of 'supernatural.' That which is supernatural to a given thing is that which is beyond the natural (proportionate) capacities of that thing, and although most scholastic positions outlined the natural/supernatural relationship in terms of the supernatural transcending the capacities of the natural, Lonergan distinguished between two notions of 'supernatural': that which is finite, which he terms the 'relatively supernatural,' and that which exceeds the capacities "of any finite substance whatsoever, whether created or creatable," which he terms the 'absolutely supernatural.'<sup>20</sup> Thus, while

16 Ibid., 85.

17 A full account of Lonergan's notion of hierarchical world-order would be too lengthy and complex to deal with in this paper. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 44-45 and 56-58, provides a brief explanation to which we have referred in constructing our summary account here. See also Lonergan, *Insight*, chap. 8, and "Finality, Love, Marriage," 18-22.

18 Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 45. See also page 142.

19 Ibid., 142.

20 DES:21, (emphases mine).

a chemical is relatively supernatural to a molecule and intelligence is relatively supernatural to psychic processes, only that which transcends *any* created level of reality – namely, God – fits this second meaning of ‘supernatural.’

It is Lonergan’s next move, however, that truly goes beyond the limitations of post-Reformation thought. He proposes that within a universe conceived of as a series of levels with the lower being for the sake of the higher, the higher somehow must be the end of the lower. Therefore, one has in the lower levels a finality oriented toward and proportionate to, not those lower levels, but a higher level. Lonergan terms this a ‘vertical finality.’<sup>21</sup>

Most scholastics readily admit two kinds of finality.<sup>22</sup> The first is absolute finality, which is the orientation of all things to God as the one self-sufficient good; the second is horizontal finality, which arises out of the restrictions placed on a thing’s tendency toward the absolute end by its own essence. But Lonergan observes that within world-order there is a third kind of finality constituted by “a vertical dynamism and tendency, an upthrust from lower to higher levels of appetite and process.”<sup>23</sup> This vertical finality resides in a concrete plurality and develops within the realm of statistical law, such that it is “not of the abstract *per se* but of the concrete *per accidens*.”<sup>24</sup>

This reference to the concrete is precisely why vertical finality is a notion that has developed later than absolute and horizontal finality. While absolute and horizontal finality are much more readily seen through metaphysics alone, it is only with the advent of modern science that vertical finality is easily seen. It has become clear that “just as the real object tends to God as real motive and real term, just as the essence of the real object limits the mode of appetite and of process, so a concrete plurality of essences has an upthrust from lower to higher levels.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, there is no difference, insofar as each finality is real and intrinsic, between an individual nature’s horizontal finality directed toward a proportionate end and the vertical finality directed toward a transcendent end found in a plurality of those natures: the latter is seen any time a set of lower

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21 Stebbins, “Bernard Lonergan’s Early Theology of Grace,” 349.

22 The following analysis is found in Lonergan, “Finality, Love, Marriage,” 18-22.

23 Ibid., 18.

24 Ibid., 22.

25 Lonergan, “Finality, Love, Marriage,” 21.

entities evolves into a higher entity.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the notion of vertical finality enables metaphysics to explain the development modern science detects in real, concrete things as they move from lower to higher levels of being because such finality is "the very possibility of development, of novelty, of synthesis, of higher grades of being."<sup>27</sup> The end of such development is more excellent than the end of horizontal finality because "from the very concept of hierarchy the higher is the more excellent."<sup>28</sup> Yet, although it arises out of a concrete plurality, still vertical finality does arise out of what the thing is, and so it is certainly essential, though to a lesser degree than horizontal finality. Likewise, although it is less excellent than vertical finality, still the excellence of horizontal finality is only *relatively* less than that of vertical finality, because all finality is a limited mode of orientation to the ultimate good that is God, and so the difference between a lower and a higher excellence is always relative. The term 'supernatural,' then, denotes that more excellent end to which something has a vertical finality.

In the case of human beings, this means that we are destined to two formally distinct finalities – a horizontal finality found in each of our individual natures directing us toward a natural, proportionate end, and a vertical finality found in a concrete plurality of humankind directing us toward a supernatural, transcendent end. While the former is the more essential proportionate grasp of God through knowledge of being, the latter is the more excellent grasp of God in Trinity through the gift of the beatific vision.

Yet it remains to explain how it is that we are able to receive that gift, and so we are now in a position to move on to the second of our terms to consider – 'obediential potency.' Lonergan outlines four types of vertical finality.<sup>29</sup> The first three are in the realm of the relatively supernatural; they involve the finality of finite activities or entities toward higher finite activities or entities. The fourth type of vertical finality, however, involves the absolutely supernatural. This is 'obediential potency,' and it denotes the sort of potency that enables the reception, by a finite entity, of the self-communication of the divine essence.<sup>30</sup>

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26 Ibid., 21-22.

27 Stebbins, "Bernard Lonergan's Early Theology of Grace," 289.

28 Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage," 23.

29 Ibid., 20-21.

30 DES:57.



This potency is explained through Lonergan's differentiation of specific types of potencies. In his scholastic language, a 'potency' is simply "an orientation or order towards act."<sup>31</sup> If the orientation or order is toward the production of an act, the potency is considered to be an 'active' potency. If the orientation is toward the reception of an act, the potency is a 'passive' potency.<sup>32</sup> The latter can be the orientation "of first act towards receiving second act," in which case it is known as an 'accidental' passive potency, or it can be the orientation "toward the reception of first act," and then this potency is known as an 'essential' passive potency.<sup>33</sup> Such essential passive potency can be either a 'natural' potency, in which case it "possesses neither form nor habit but none the less can be reduced to information by a created agent," or an 'obediential' potency, "which possesses neither form nor habit and cannot be moved to information by any created agent."<sup>34</sup>

*De ente supernaturali* offers one further differentiation. In that treatise, Lonergan proposes that any given potency can be understood as either proximate or remote. A proximate potency is "virtually of the same proportion as the first act to which it is ordered," while a remote potency "is not of the same proportion, either formally or virtually, as the act to which it is ordered."<sup>35</sup> This means that a proximate potency, the potency of something virtually proportionate to the reception of the higher-level reality, does not require further determinations for its actuation, but a remote potency does require such further determinations for its actuation, and the degree to which such determinations are needed depends on "the difference between the proportion of a given first act and the proportion of the essential passive potency in question."<sup>36</sup>

Lonergan's argument here seeks to differentiate the different capacities of things in terms of different types of potency. The distinction between active and passive potency is the distinction between the ability to act

31 Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 144.

32 Ibid.

33 DES:58.

34 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *De sanctissima Trinitate: Supplementum quoddam* (Gregorian University, Rome, 1955), 104.

35 DES:60. To illustrate this distinction, Lonergan says that "a body that is duly disposed for receiving a spiritual soul is not formally of the same proportion as that soul, for there is nothing spiritual about it; but it is virtually of the same proportion, that is, considering it as a cause, since the functional purpose (*finis operis*) of a properly disposed body is to receive a soul."

36 Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 146.

and the ability to be acted upon. The distinction between accidental and essential potency is a distinction between, on the one hand, receiving an act that makes something what it is, and on the other hand, receiving an act that is secondary to what that thing is, such as the distinction between a woman receiving the formal quality of "human being" versus her receiving the formal quality of "university professor." The distinction between natural and obediential potency rests on the created or uncreated status of the agent needed to bring the potency to actuality. Finally, the distinction between proximate and remote potency regards the ontological proximity of the potential to the actual; the closer the potency is to the actuality, the less any further concrete events must occur in order for the potency to be actualized.

Condensing this complex language, we can say that obediential potency is for Lonergan a remote potency that is an essential passive potency. In other words, our capacity for the reception of God's self-communication is a potency for the reception of first act that requires further determinations before it can be actuated. This potency, further, is a species of vertical finality because the act for which it is a potency is an act beyond the proportionate level of human activity, and finally because it is a potency that can only be actuated by an infinite agent, it is of the fourth type of vertical finality – obediential potency. Thus for Lonergan, obediential potency is a capacity to be constituted as what one is by an uncreated agent, given certain concrete events.

### 1.2 The Realization of the Obediential Potency in Social Form

In one portion of his treatise *De Deo Trino*, Lonergan examines the concrete manifestation of grace, which concerns us precisely insofar as it illumines the vision Lonergan had of the actuation of the obediential potency in a concrete plurality of human beings.<sup>37</sup> To begin the discussion, he tells us that "St. Thomas interprets [the] indwelling, gift, possessing, and enjoying [illustrated in Scripture] in accord with the fact that through the grace that renders us pleasing God is in the just as the known in the knower and the beloved in the lover."<sup>38</sup>

37 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, CWL 12, ed. Robert M. Doran, Daniel Monsour, and Michael Shields (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), ch. 6.

38 Ibid. 353-5. He cites 1Jn. 4:8, 13, 16; Gal. 4:6; Jn. 14:15-17, 20-21, 23; 15:4-5, 9; 17:21-

To examine the presence of the known in the knower and the beloved in the lover, an extended discussion on presence then follows.<sup>39</sup> First, Lonergan says, presence would seem to mean spatial proximity. But stones are not said to be present to one another, and so there must be something more to presence. Second, that more “would seem to be a certain psychic adaptation resulting from spatial proximity,” but then spatial proximity becomes only a condition for presence, not presence itself.<sup>40</sup> Third, because humans have “the utmost freedom of imagination” and we can bring to mind the past, the future, or other things that are not spatially proximate to us, and we can experience the “psychic adaptation” of presence when we do so, we must admit a differentiation of two types of presence in human beings – one having to do with spatial proximity and the other having to do with the freedom of humans intentionally to imitate spatial proximity.<sup>41</sup> Fourth, human beings are persons because “they have an intellectual nature and operate in accordance with it,” and in terms of the operations proper to that intellectual nature (and thus to human personhood) “that which is known is in the knower with an intentional existence, and what is loved is joined and united to the lover” in the same manner; this “in” is an instance of presence (it can result in “psychic adaptation”) and the presence in these two operations (knowing and loving) “can be called personal presence” because these operations are proper to persons.<sup>42</sup> Finally, because we only truly know a person through a succession of many such presence-bearing acts, and in performing such a succession of acts we develop a habit, then “it is a habit that provides the foundation of that knowledge by which a person who is truly known is in the knower,”<sup>43</sup> and the same is true of love.

Next, Lonergan goes on to establish that such knowing and loving cannot but be social for human beings. He notes that persons, interpersonal relations, habits of knowing and feeling, interpersonal coordination, and recurring instances of particular goods are all interrelated.<sup>44</sup> It is the good of order that maintains an intelligible relation among these elements, and the

23, 26; Rom. 7:17-18, 20; 8:8-11, 14-17; 1Cor. 2:16-17; 6:15-20; 13; 2Cor. 5:14-21; and 2Tim. 1:13-14.

39 Ibid., 355-7.

40 Ibid., 355.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 355-6.

43 Ibid., 356.

44 Ibid., 356-7.



strength of their interrelation is the strength of the order thereby achieved:

But since these are the same elements that constitute personal presence, it must be said that the degree of perfection by which the good of order is achieved is the same as that by which personal presence is achieved, and similarly, that the degree of perfection by which personal presence is achieved is the same as that by which the good of order is achieved [such that] there is [a type of] personal presence whereby persons, pursuing a common good of order, are in one another as the known in the knower and the beloved in the lover.<sup>45</sup>

The interrelation of these elements, then, dictates that the knowledge and love with which we are concerned cannot but be deeply involved with community.

This analysis, however, is as it were from the human "side." Lonergan therefore moves on to examine the matter beginning with God. First, "God is in himself as the known in the knower and the beloved in the lover."<sup>46</sup> This is because the word of God, being a mental word, is formally the same as that which is known, in this case Godself. And because in God to be is to understand, God's formal reality is God's material reality; therefore, it is God that is in God in the way a known is in the knower, and the word of this knowing (the Word) is God because it bears not only a formal but also a material identity to God. The same general principle and method of reasoning applies to love, such that Lonergan can say, similarly, that the Holy Spirit must be God.

For Lonergan, this Trinitarian analogy carries with it implications concerning the Divine Persons in the very community of the Trinity itself. "Those whose being and understanding and knowing and loving are one and the same and are indeed that which they themselves are, are in one another in the most perfect way."<sup>47</sup> But it carries farther, to include not just the Triune Godhead but all of creation. Lonergan points out that all things are known and loved by God and are thus in God, "not, of course, in the consubstantiality of the divine nature, but according to intentional existence and the quasi-identification of those in love."<sup>48</sup> Within creation, however,

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45 Ibid., 357.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., 358.

48 Ibid.

there are beings whom "he foreknew [and] predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" [Rom. 8:29] and those beings

who are known and loved in this special way are also seen to be present in God in a special way as the known in the knower and the beloved in the lover. Therefore in a special way they are in the divine Word in which God the Father utters himself and all other things; and in a special way they are in the divine proceeding Love in which God the Father and God the Son love both themselves and all other things as well.<sup>49</sup>

Second, regarding Christ, Lonergan provides a host of biblical references to show that knowing him and loving him are linked to one another and to his knowing and loving us,<sup>50</sup> and Lonergan concludes this point by quoting 2Cor. 5:14-17, including the passage (vv.15-17):

and he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

With this in mind, Lonergan reaffirms that Christ and those he knows must live in one another as the known in the knower and the beloved in the lover, and he adds the point that the indwelling is the cause of a change of point of view, such that "we regard no one from a human point of view."<sup>51</sup>

Third, Christ did not teach his own doctrine or do his own will, but he taught the doctrine of the Father and did the Father's will; likewise, "Christ does not unite the members of his body with himself without uniting them with God the Father."<sup>52</sup> Another list of citations is provided,<sup>53</sup> and Lonergan concludes from this material that "the divine persons themselves and the blessed in heaven and the just on this earth are in one another as those who

49 Ibid., 358-9.

50 Lonergan cites Mt. 7:23; Jn. 10:14; 12:32; 15:9, 13; Ga. 2:19-20; Ep. 3:16-19 in *ibid.*, 359-60.

51 Ibid., 360.

52 Ibid.

53 1Jn. 4:10, 19; 2Cor. 5:19; Jn. 14:9, 15-17, 21; 16:27; 17:21, 23, 26; Mt. 25:31-46 in *ibid.*, 360-1.

are known are in those who know them and those who are loved are in those who love them."<sup>54</sup> But he cautions that there is a distinction within the various kinds of indwelling observed here: "the divine persons are in one another through consubstantiality; the just are in God and in one another by way of intentional existence and the quasi-identification of love."<sup>55</sup> Even with this distinction, however, Christ provides a qualification, for "we are in the Word, however, as known and loved through both his divine and his human nature; and the Word is in us in order that in knowing and loving a visible human being we may arrive at knowing and loving God, who dwells in unapproachable light."<sup>56</sup> Through this encounter with a human being, then, "we are led...to that higher knowledge and love in which we no longer know Christ from a human point of view [recall the reference to 2Cor. 5:16 above], but our inner word of the divine Word is spoken in us intelligently according to the emanation of truth, and our love of divine Love is spirated according to the emanation of holiness."<sup>57</sup> Thus, through Christ the community constituted by the Divine Persons, the members of which are the just, is able to move from a purely intentional presence in one another and in the Trinity toward a more substantial indwelling, one that is necessarily an indwelling and interrelationship of community.

In light of the foregoing, Lonergan can make his major proposal:

[T]he state or situation of grace refers to many distinct subjects together. Thus to constitute the state of grace there are required (1) the Father who loves, (2) the Son because of whom the Father loves, (3) the Holy Spirit by whom the Father loves and gives, and (4) the just, whom, because of the Son, the Father loves by the Holy Spirit, and to whom the Father gives by the Holy Spirit, and who consequently are endowed with sanctifying grace, whence flow the virtues and gifts, and who are thereby just and upright and ready to receive and elicit acts ordered towards eternal life.<sup>58</sup>

He further maintains that it is "*in accordance with this state* [that] the divine persons and the just are in one another as those who are known are in those

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54 Ibid., 361.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., 361-2.

58 Ibid., 365.



who know them and those who are loved are in those who love them."<sup>59</sup> Thus, the actuation of the obediential potency for God, which is the indwelling with which Lonergan is concerned in this treatise, is necessarily a communal reality, involving not the individual as such, but (to return to our earlier terminology) a concrete plurality.

### 1.3 Summary

In Lonergan's writings we find a solution to the nature/grace problematic that has been worked out in scholastic terminology but with a renewed interpretation and understanding of Thomist thought. This new way of looking at the Thomist position allowed Lonergan not only to reply to the discussion, but to go beyond it, transcend its framework, and establish a more nuanced and differentiated position.

By utilizing a notion of vertical finality to articulate obediential potency, Lonergan reworked the notions of finality and exigence that were operative in the ongoing debate. He could then posit a natural desire for a supernatural end without threatening the gratuity of that end. Further, because that natural desire involved a vertical finality, it was consequently in community that Lonergan envisioned the fulfillment of that natural desire occurring.

## 2. RAHNER'S SUPERNATURAL EXISTENTIAL

Rahner's theory of the supernatural existential tends to hold currency today on this issue; most theologians hold to an understanding of this problematic and its solution that is essentially grounded in Rahner's position, whether or not they are explicitly aware of that fact. For any other understanding of the nature/grace question to bear fruit in the discourse of the larger theological community, it must deal with Rahner's theory.

Because of the broader acceptance and knowledge of Rahner's position, we need not spend quite so much time on it as we did on Lonergan's understanding of the issue. I present here a brief account of Rahner's notion of the supernatural existential as summarized in four points he provided in his brief article, "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," followed by my own summary clarification of Rahner's theory.

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59 Ibid. Emphases mine.

First, human beings ought to have the capacity to receive the love that God is. There must be a real, always-present potency in human beings for the reception of the divine Self; this is "the central and abiding existential of man as he really is."<sup>60</sup> Second, the reception of this divine Self must be the reception of a gift; therefore the capacity of the human being for the reception of the love that God is must be due not to our human-being-ness (nature), but to the gift of God. Our "abiding existential," then, must be supernatural.<sup>61</sup> Third, it is through the reception of this love in the Holy Spirit and through the gospel that we are able to determine just what it is in us that is of us and what it is that is of this "supernatural existential." That which is of us is just that which is left over after the supernatural existential is subtracted. This "'nature' in the theological sense" is that which is distinguished from the supernatural existential.<sup>62</sup> Fourth, nature must of itself and as human nature be open to the supernatural existential. There must be more than mere non-repugnance; there must be a real yet conditioned ordering toward the supernatural existential. This ordering can be identified as the dynamism of the human spirit, but one must be careful not to identify this dynamism as it is *ordered* to the supernatural existential with the dynamism *experienced* in our quiddity because the supernatural existential is an ever-present aspect of our quiddity as we experience it.<sup>63</sup>

There are two fundamental points to be grasped concerning the supernatural existential. First, it is not of our nature. This is the 'supernatural' element of the term. Whatever the supernatural existential is, it is not a result of human nature as such; it must be a gift of God. Second, it pertains not to our essence, not to our human nature as such, but to our existence or quiddity. This is the 'existential' element of the term. It involves the concrete *de facto* situation of every human being's existence in this real concrete world, and not the essence of what we are as such.

### 3. COMPARISON

It should be clear from what has been said above that world-order is an integral aspect of Lonergan's solution. However, there is certainly a

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60 Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 311.

61 Ibid., 312-313.

62 Ibid., 313-315.

63 Ibid., 315-316.

world-order component to Rahner's position, as well. Because "it is part of the Catholic statement of faith that the supernatural saving purpose of God extends to all human beings in all ages and places in history,"<sup>64</sup> the existential must be "continuous and permanent rather than 'intermittent'"<sup>65</sup> and thus the supernatural existential is the situation of the concrete order of things in which we are destined for direct union with God. Every person in every place and time is then the locus of God's self-communication and that self-communication must be present always to everyone as the condition of possibility for its own acceptance.<sup>66</sup>

There is significant similarity on the individual level, as well. For Lonergan, the potency for God, though described as either 'natural' or 'obediential,' is ontologically always natural, precisely because the potency in either case is a potency of *human nature* and its distinction as natural or obediential is *only* extrinsic. 'Natural' in this distinction refers only to the relation between the proportion of the actuating agent and that of the nature with the potency, not to the fact that the potency is of *human nature*, as if it were to be distinguished from obediential potency in the sense that the latter is *not* of human nature. Insofar as the distinction between the two potencies is extrinsic, they are *both* of human nature; insofar as the difference between them is of the *per se*, they are two really distinct potencies, one of which is ordered to a proportionate end, the other of which is ordered to a transcendent end, one of which is actuated by a finite agent, the other of which is actuated by an infinite agent.<sup>67</sup>

Similarly, the Rahnerian position contends that, while "modally supernatural," the supernatural existential is "entitatively natural."<sup>68</sup> The end of Rahner's "pure nature" is to be distinguished formally from the end of the supernatural existential while the desire for both ends belongs to the nature (even if it is not of the nature), just as the natural and obediential potencies of Lonergan's system are distinguished formally while the desire

64 Karl Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation-History," *Theological Investigations V*, trans. Karl-H. Kruger, pages 97-114 (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 97.

65 David M. Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential," *Theological Studies* 65, no.1 (2004): 105. See also Karl Rahner, "Nature and Grace," *Theological Investigations IV*, trans. Kevin Smyth, pages 165-188 (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 180.

66 Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 127-129.

67 DES:69.

68 Coffey, "The Whole Rahner," 116.



for each of them belongs to the nature.

These similarities, however, exist in counterpoint to the differences between Lonergan and Rahner on this issue. In the Rahnerian understanding, an unconditional desire for an end that requires grace constitutes a threat to the gratuity of that grace, as noted by Fr. David Coffey:

If God assigns an end to everyone he creates, and the 'desire' of this end belongs to the nature of the person in question, God owes to that person the possibility of attaining the assigned end either from the unaided resources of his or her nature or, in the case of the beatific vision, with the help of grace, which would mean that both grace and the beatific vision would lose their essentially gratuitous character.<sup>69</sup>

Based on this reasoning, the Rahnerian position disallows the possibility of a natural desire for God *uti in se est*, if by that phrase one intends or includes God as Trinity. But the structure of this understanding of natures and ends is involved in the very essentialist notions criticized by Lonergan. While de Lubac's understanding of nature and grace naturalized the supernatural end of the desire, Rahner's theory raised human nature beyond its proportionate capacities.<sup>70</sup> Both of these moves are necessitated by the same fundamental error – that all desires and ends must be horizontally related. There is no room in either theologian's position for an existentialist understanding of the universe in which vertical finality allows a given nature to have a transcendent end, an end that is *supernatural*. When that sort of finality is admitted, one allows for the obediential potency Lonergan asserts. This sort of potency, moreover, is protected from exigence, and thus from threatening the gratuity of grace, because it requires further determinations for its actuation. To assert the opposite would be akin to asserting that organic chemicals have an exigence for the reception of a rational soul. While organic chemicals have a vertical finality for the reception of a rational soul, that vertical finality requires further

69 Coffey, "The Whole Rahner," 102.

70 With regard to Rahner, see "Concerning the Relationship," 312-313. With regard to de Lubac, it is worth noting a comment made in Doran, "Lonergan and Balthasar," 73, to the effect that Lonergan's position "is in fundamental harmony with Henri de Lubac's position in *The Mystery of the Supernatural*." I would disagree with Fr. Doran and propose, as I have here, that Lonergan's grasp of vertical finality allowed him a better solution to the problem. See Stebbins, "Bernard Lonergan's Early Theology of Grace," 294-296 and also Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 355.

determination and thus there is no exigence.<sup>71</sup>

It is also this same involvement with essentialism that asks for a clarification of the phrase Lonergan uses to designate the object of our natural desire – “*God uti in se est*” – insofar as a distinction is demanded between God as creator and God as Trinity. Already in the phrasing of the question, we find an either/or option – *either* God as creator *or* God as Trinity. There is no option within such an understanding that would allow for Lonergan’s notion of one end with two formally distinct ways of being reached, one of which is a sublation of the other. However, when vertical finality is admitted in addition to horizontal finality, one allows for the Lonerganian reply that we have one natural desire fulfilled in a twofold manner: knowledge of God as Creator corresponding to our natural potency, and knowledge of God as Trinity corresponding to our obediential potency. ‘God as Creator’ and ‘God in God’s full Trinitarian life’ are not two materially different objects of knowledge; they are two modally or formally distinct ways of knowing *one* material object<sup>72</sup> in which one of the formally distinct objects sublates the other. Further, each formal way of knowing the one material object reaches its own sort of ‘rest.’ The ‘rest’ achieved in the knowledge of God as Creator involves only the cessation of the effort to achieve another end and is thus imperfect, while the ‘rest’ reached in knowledge of God in Trinity involves participation in the intrinsic immobility of God and is thus perfect. Lonergan in fact maintains that “the Thomist distinction is between *beatitudo perfecta* and *imperfecta*” as opposed to the distinction between *beatitudo naturalis* and *supernaturalis* that developed later and became so emphasized in the post-Reformation framework in which both de Lubac and Rahner worked.<sup>73</sup>

Contrary to that framework, for Lonergan, although natural fulfillment is imperfect relative to supernatural fulfillment, human nature does not require supernatural fulfillment for its natural perfection: natural knowledge of God is a proportionate fulfillment of the natural desire and all that is required by a nature is a proportionate fulfillment of its end.<sup>74</sup> This way of conceiving the solution to the issue maintains a useful distinction. First, this is precisely why the condemnation of *Humani Generis* does not apply to

71 Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 154. Exigence with respect to natural and obediential remote essential passive potencies is discussed in DES:60-61.

72 See Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 340, note 33 to page 156.

73 DES:74. See also Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 354.

74 DES:74. See also Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 157 and DES:78.

Lonergan's position: God could have created a world order without grace in which the obediential potency is not actuated, thus creating us just as we are but without concretely destining us for the beatific vision. Second, the proportionality of natural fulfillment to our natural desire is precisely why Lonergan's position is not subject to the Rahnerian critique that natural fulfillment could be made into "a half unhappiness."<sup>75</sup> A natural fulfillment, precisely because it is a real fulfillment of what is required, would thus not be any sort of half unfulfillment.<sup>76</sup> We have only one material end – God as God really and completely is. But that end is reached in two formally distinct ways, both of which are fulfillments of our one natural desire, the one act proportionate and more essential, the other act disproportionate and more excellent.

#### CONCLUSION

It is precisely Lonergan's emphasis on the priority of world-order and the consequent importance of the concrete for his thought that allows his position on the nature-grace question to be such a complete response to the issue. Quite simply, it is not in being *less* existential that Lonergan's solution finds its way to affirming a natural desire for God; rather, it is in being *more* existential. Vertical finality resides in a concrete plurality and is of the *per accidens*. It belongs to matter-of-fact existential reality, but with his emphasis on the priority of world-order Lonergan makes an allowance for the ultimately intelligible nature of the existential, and thus for him the existential does have an ontological import. Therefore, in the case of humankind's potency for the absolutely supernatural, it not only includes, but even arises from, this existential reality, and thus the actuation of that potency is a function of the concrete interaction of elements that is history. There is a relation between Rahner's emphasis on concrete quiddity and history and the position of Lonergan as outlined above insofar as, for the latter, history is the realm within which the "further determinations" of the potency occur, and so the theological study of history is, in part, a study of the accrual of the "further determinations" necessary for the actuation of the potency.<sup>77</sup>

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75 Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship," 303.

76 This, it would seem, is the force of Rahner's concern with "a half unhappiness."

77 A similar point is made, though not in these words, by Ormerod, *Method, Meaning*,



The similarities between the position of Rahner and that of Lonergan are striking, and they have at their core a likeness resulting from the existential emphasis of each of these thinkers. Fundamentally, although Rahner's insights on the topic ran deep and he did seek to move in the direction of an existential answer to the question, as a matter of fact he was unable to overcome completely the framework that so dominated the post-Reformation system of the *duplex ordo*, and that limitation prevented him from fully overcoming the essentialist, horizontally-fixated notion of natures. He was thus prevented from being able to make the statement that Lonergan was able to make: Human beings have a natural desire for a supernatural end, God as God is in Godself.



# HISTORY, SOCIETY, AND THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE POOR: A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR IN ROBERT DORAN'S *THEOLOGY AND THE DIALECTICS OF HISTORY*

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AT A 1975 congress in Mexico City, the proceedings of which were published as *Liberación y cautiverio*,<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lonergan's work on method was heavily criticized. Hugo Assmann contended that Lonergan's theology does not lead to history.<sup>2</sup> José Comblin made two negative assessments, one glib, and the other scathing. The first claimed that if medieval theologians had to engage in the task of theology as Lonergan envisaged it, they would not have stuck at the theological task for even fifteen minutes.<sup>3</sup> The second suggested that Lonergan's thought was made to order for the task of supporting the ideologies of Latin America's juntas and dictatorships.<sup>4</sup> This article stands as a modest reply to such criticisms. Specifically, it explores what Lonergan scholar Robert Doran's *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (TDH - and the social theory latent within it - may be able to contribute to liberation thought.<sup>5</sup> A comprehensive analysis of

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1 Enrique Ruiz Maldonado (ed.), *Liberación y cautiverio: Debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina* (México Cita: Comité Organizador, 1975).

2 Ibid., 296.

3 Ibid., 518.

4 Ibid., 517, 519.

5 Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: UofT Press, 1990).



this issue is beyond the scope of a single article.<sup>6</sup> Rather than attempting to analyze the whole corpus of liberation theology's literature, this investigation focuses more narrowly upon the notion of the preferential option for the poor (POFTP). Gustavo Gutiérrez has described the POFTP as the central point of liberation theology;<sup>7</sup> to relate the POFTP to *TDH* helps to illustrate the potency of Doran's *TDH* as a foundation for a liberationist theology.<sup>8</sup>

This article has three sections. The first outlines Doran's theological foundations—including the essential elements of Lonergan's thought—as constructed in *TDH*, and then uses this outline to present the theory of society that *TDH* contains. In the second section, a brief definition of the POFTP is provided. In the final section, Doran's social theory is employed to elaborate upon his understanding of the POFTP, and also to present a preliminary exploration of two significant strengths of Doran's stance.

#### ROBERT DORAN'S 'THEOLOGY AND THE DIALECTICS OF HISTORY'

In *TDH* Doran builds upon his prior works *Subject and Psyche* and *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*.<sup>9</sup> *TDH* presents Doran's refinement of Lonergan's stance on the human subject and employs this foundation to construct an heuristic structure for historical process. Key elements required for understanding *TDH* are Lonergan's positions on (1) the vectors

6 Note should be made of Patrick Byrne's article, "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor," *Theological Studies* (June, 1993), 213–41. Byrne uses a Lonergan's perspective to challenge Nietzsche's criticism of Christian charity, and does so with specific reference to the option for the poor. For the sake of conciseness, however, focus in this article will remain solely on Doran's work. There are many connections that can be drawn between Byrne's and Doran's positions, but such matters will have to wait for a latter research.

7 Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. C. Rowland (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 35.

8 It is worth indicating that this article focuses on the POFTP and social analysis and specifically with relation to *TDH*. The relevance of Lonergan's understanding of mutual self-mediation—theology's role between religion and culture—as developed by Doran elsewhere is highly relevant to a theological understanding of the POFTP. It is simply outside the scope of this study. Robert Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: UofT Press, 2005), 56–60. See also Bernard Lonergan, "The Mediation of Christ in Prayer" in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964*, Vol. 6 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. R.C. Croken, F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran (Toronto: UofT Press, 1996), 160–82.

9 Robert M. Doran, *Subject and Psyche: Ricoeur, Jung and the Search for Foundations* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1971). And Robert M. Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences* (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1981).

of healing and creating in the human subject, (2) the notion of dialectic, and (3) the scale of values.

#### THE RELEVANT ELEMENTS OF LONERGAN'S THOUGHT

##### *The Vectors of Creating and Healing in the Human Subject*

For Lonergan, there is a movement that begins before consciousness and unfolds up through the levels of consciousness—through sensitivity, intelligence, rationality, and responsibility—to find its fulfillment at the apex of human consciousness.<sup>10</sup> The person is, in this sense, a creative conscious vector able to move from experience to growing understanding, to balanced judgment, to successful courses of action.<sup>11</sup> But after reflecting on the nature of love, Lonergan identified a second trajectory of development in human consciousness that functions to complement the upwards movement. With its origin in transformative love, human consciousness is also transformed from above downward. Lonergan writes,

... human development is of two different kinds. There is development from below upwards, from experience to understanding, from growing understanding to balanced judgment, from balanced judgment to fruitful courses of action, and from fruitful courses of action to new situations that call for further understanding, profounder judgment, richer courses of action. But there also is development from above downwards. There is the transformation of falling in love: the domestic love of the family; the human love of one's tribe, one's country, mankind; the divine love that orientates man in his cosmos and expresses itself in worship.<sup>12</sup>

This second, 'healing' vector is rooted in love and it complements the achievements of the human spirit. Lonergan believes that development from above downwards conditions our development from below upwards.

10 Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 31. Bernard Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," in *A Third Collection*, ed. F.E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 174–75.

11 Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 31.

12 Bernard Lonergan "Healing and Creating in History," *A Third Collection*, ed. F.E. Crowe (Mahwah; Paulist Press, 1985), 106.

Ideally—*viz.*, when the human subject is in love with God—the vectors are concurrently operative and the corrosive effect of bias upon human achievement is overcome by the divine grace. A transformation rooted in being-in-love then guides the creative process of the human subject.

### *The Notion of Dialectic*

In *Insight* Lonergan traces the lineage of the term 'dialectic' in its usage from Plato, to Aristotle, to the Schoolmen, to Hegel, to Marx.<sup>13</sup> Lonergan ends his sketch of dialectic by noting that the term has been used to denote a combination of the concrete, the dynamic, and the contradictory. Moreover, this combination can be found in objects as diverse as dialogue, the history of philosophic opinions, or actual historical process.<sup>14</sup> Lonergan then defines dialectic as

a concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles of change. Thus there will be a dialectic if (1) there is an aggregate of events of a determinate character, (2) the events may be traced to either or both of the two principles, (3) the principles are opposed yet bound together, and (4) they are modified by the changes that successively result from them.<sup>15</sup>

Doran develops this notion in *TDH*. He suggests that there are two forms of dialectic based on distinct kinds of opposition. These are the 'dialectic of contraries' and the 'dialectic of contradictories'.<sup>16</sup> The dialectic of contradictories is evident in the relationship between what Lonergan identifies as the two kinds of human knowing. This is Lonergan's more prevalent usage of the term dialectic. The two types of knowledge are the experiential knowledge humans have in common with all animals and the intelligent and rational intentional consciousness that is unique to humans. For Lonergan, experiencing is not full human knowing. One resolves this dialectic by breaking it and affirming that one is a knower who understands correctly only by a composite performance of experiencing, understanding, and judging. The dialectic of contradictories thus takes the form of an opposition of exclusion. In a dialectic of contradictories these opposed

13 Lonergan, *Insight*, 242.

14 Ibid..

15 Ibid..

16 Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 185. See also Lonergan, *Insight*, 11-24.



principles are mutually exclusive—a case of either/or—and can only be resolved by a choice of one pole.<sup>17</sup>

A dialectic of contraries is manifest in what Lonergan identifies as the tension between the two types of consciousness. In Doran's terminology such a dialectic arises from this duality of consciousness, that is, in the tension between intentionality and psyche. The psyche is the experienced flow of life, the sensitive representation of the underlying neural demand functions. It is comprised of the flow of our sensations, memories, images, emotions, conations, associations, bodily movements, spontaneous intersubjective responses, and of the symbolic integrations of these that are our dreams.<sup>18</sup> But the operations of understanding, judgment and decision re-pattern, organize and arrange our experiences.<sup>19</sup> Unlike the dialectic of contradictories in which the tension is broken and transcended, the dialectic of contraries—like the dialectic between intentionality and psyche—functions by virtue of the creative tension of the dialectical relationship. It represents an opposition between opposed principles that is reconcilable in a higher synthesis. A dialectic of contraries is to be affirmed and strengthened. A principle of transcendence (the operator—e.g., intentionality) transforms a principle of limitation (the integrator—e.g., psyche). These poles work together in an inclusive manner of both/and.

### *The Scales of Values*

Lonergan's understanding of a normative scale of values plays a seminal role in Doran's work. Feelings are responses to values. But, as feelings need to be discerned, not all values are equal, and the converted subject responds to values in an order of preference. It is worth quoting Lonergan on this scale.

Not only do feelings respond to values. They do so in accord with some scale of preference. So we may distinguish vital, social, cultural, personal and religious values in ascending order. Vital values, such as health and strength, grace and vigor, normally are preferred to avoiding the work, privations, pains involved in acquiring, maintaining, restoring them. Social values, such

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17 Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 64–92.

18 *Ibid.*, 46.

19 *Ibid.*, 46–47.

as the good of order which conditions the vital values of the whole community, have to be preferred to the vital values of individual members of the community. Cultural values do not exist without the underpinning of vital and social values, but none the less they rank higher. Not on bread alone doth man live. Over and above mere living and operating, men have to find a meaning and value in their living and operating. It is the function of culture to discover, express, validate, criticize, correct, develop, improve such meaning and value. Personal value is the person in his self-transcendence, as loving and being loved, as originator of values in himself and in his milieu, as an inspiration and invitation to others to do likewise. Religious values, finally, are at the heart of the meaning and value of man's living and man's world.<sup>20</sup>

Whilst this is a skeletal presentation of Lonergan's scale of values, it suffices until the use Doran makes of it is explicated in the next section.

#### THE METHOD EMPLOYED BY ROBERT DORAN TO CONTRUCT HIS THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

TDH is not an exercise in systematic theology *per se* — that is, in faith seeking understanding — but it rather “is a work more of foundations than of systematics.”<sup>21</sup> Doran intends his foundations to facilitate the theologian's task of constructing “the meanings constitutive of that praxis of the reign of God through which the human world itself is changed.”<sup>22</sup> His view of theology is grounded upon “a theory of history elaborated with a theological end in view” which is thereby able to “specify just what the reign of God in this world would be.”<sup>23</sup>

Doran claims the notion of dialectic combines with a dynamic understanding of the scale of values to achieve this end. The combination provides an heuristic structure that enables the understanding of historical process, in addition to any given situation within historical process.<sup>24</sup> He

20 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: UofT Press, 1990), 31–32.

21 Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 7.

22 Ibid., 5.

23 Ibid., 12.

24 Ibid., 10. See also Robert Doran, “The Analogy of Dialectic and The Systematics of History,” in *Religion in Context: Recent Studies in Lonergan*, ed. T.P. Fallon and P.B. Riley

identifies a dialectic functioning as the principle of integrity at the level of personal value, and by analogy at the levels of cultural and social value.<sup>25</sup> And, the creating and healing vectors are employed to account for the unity and movement from level-to-level of the scale of values. In this manner, history can be conceived as a complex network of dialectics of subjects, communities, and cultures.<sup>26</sup>

For Doran, the relations among the levels of value are isomorphic with those among the levels of consciousness.<sup>27</sup> As with the levels of consciousness, the levels of value are mutually conditioning and relate to each other from both above and below.

From above, then, religious values condition the possibility of personal integrity; personal integrity conditions the possibility of authentic cultural values; at the reflexive level of culture, such integrity will promote an authentic superstructural collaboration that assumes responsibility for the integrity not only of scientific and scholarly disciplines, but even of everyday culture; cultural integrity at both levels conditions the possibility of a just social order; and a just social order condition the possibility of the equitable distribution of vital goods. Conversely, problems in the effective and recurrent distribution of vital goods can be met only by a reversal of distortions in the social order; the proportions of the needed reversal are set by the scope and range of the real or potential maldistribution; the social change demands a transformation at the everyday level of culture proportionate to the dimensions of the social problem; this transformation frequently depends on reflexive theoretical and scientific developments at the superstructural level; new cultural values at both levels call for proportionate changes at the level of personal integrity; and these depend for their emergence, sustenance, and consistency on the religious

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(Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), 37.

25 The extension of the analogy of dialectic to the level of cultural value, although clearly following Lonergan's own stance on the dialectic of community and the individual, is distinctly Doran's contribution. See Doran, *Theology and the Dialectic of History*, 11; and, Lonergan, *Insight*, 210-31; 232-44.

26 Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 144.

27 For a discussion on the issue of a fifth level of consciousness, see Michael Vertin, "Lonergan on Consciousness: Is There a Fifth Level?", *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 12 (1994), 1-36.



development of the person.<sup>28</sup>

Of interest to the present discussion are the dialectics at the levels of social and cultural value, for these are the values with which social theory deals.<sup>29</sup> Society is proceeding along a line of pure progress inasmuch as the dialectics at the levels of culture and society function as dialectics of contraries.<sup>30</sup> Doran is in effect suggesting that social theory—or perhaps more accurately a theologically informed theory of society—is to anticipate that relationships between conscious subjects or between conscious subjects and their milieu will be some realisation of dialectic.<sup>31</sup> The cultural level of society is constituted by a dialectic between cosmological culture (integrator) and anthropological culture (operator).<sup>32</sup> The social level is a dialectic between spontaneous intersubjectivity (integrator) and practical intelligence (operator).<sup>33</sup> These aforementioned components combine to

28 Ibid., 96–97.

29 This brackets vital values because there is no dialectic operative at that level. The condition of the possibility for the just distribution of vital values is the successful operation of the dialectic at the social level.

30 “For dialectic is a pure form with general implications; it is applicable to any concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles that are modified cumulatively by the unfolding; it can envisage at once the conscious and the non-conscious either in a single subject or in an aggregate and succession of subjects; it is adjustable to any course of events, from an ideal line of pure progress resulting from the harmonious working of the opposed principles, to any degree of conflict, aberration, break-down, and disintegration; it constitutes a principle of integration for specialised studies that concentrate on this or that aspect of human living, and it can integrate not only theoretical work but also factual reports; finally, by its distinction between insight and bias, progress and decline, it contains in a general form the combination of the empirical and the critical attitudes essential to human science.” Lonergan, *Insight*, 268–69.

31 Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 67.

32 To quote Doran at some length, “Cosmological symbolizations of the experience of life as a movement with a direction that can be found or missed find the paradigm of order in the cosmic rhythms. This order is analogously realized in the society, and social order determines individual rectitude. Cosmological insight thus moves from the cosmos, through the society, to the individual. As such it is more compact than anthropological insight, where the measure of integrity is recognized as world-transcendent and as providing the standard first for the individual whose ordered attunement to the world-transcendent measure is itself the measure of the integrity of the society. Anthropological insight moves from God through the individual to the society. The dialectic of culture, like every dialectic of contraries, is a concrete unfolding of these linked but opposed principles of change.” Doran, “The Analogy of Dialectic,” 54–55.

33 And again, “There is a dialectic of community internally constituted by the linked but opposed principles of spontaneous intersubjectivity [communal sense] and practical intelligence. ... The integrity of the dialectic, and so of the society that it informs ‘rests on the concrete unity of opposed principles; the dominance of either principle results in a distortion, and the distortion both weakens the dominance and strengthens the opposed

form Doran's understanding of the complexion of society.

#### THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY: THEOLOGY AND THE DIALECTICS AS SOCIAL THEORY

For Doran, 'society' is a generic term.<sup>34</sup> With more precision, he claims that a society is comprised of five distinct but interrelated elements: intersubjective spontaneity, technological institutions, the economic system, the political order, and culture.<sup>35</sup> Culture has two dimensions, the everyday infrastructural level that informs a given way of life and the reflexive superstructural level that arises from scientific, philosophic, scholarly and theological objectifications. Doran sets forth the interrelationship of these components in six points.<sup>36</sup>

Firstly, spontaneous intersubjectivity—one of the constitutive principles of the dialectic of community—functions on its own as one of the elements of society. Secondly, practical intelligence, which is the other constitutive principle of the dialectic of community, gives rise to three constitutive elements of society, *viz.*, technological institutions, the economic order, and the political-legal echelon of society. Thirdly, in the society operating along an optimum line of progress, these three elements must be kept in dialectical tension with spontaneous intersubjectivity. Fourthly, the integrity—and inversely the distortion—of the dialectic of community is a function proximately of the infrastructural level of culture and more remotely of the reflexive superstructural level of culture. Fifthly, spontaneous intersubjectivity, technological institutions, economic systems, political-legal institutions, and everyday culture constitute the infrastructure of a healthy society. Moreover, the reflexive level of culture constitutes society's superstructure, and culture at *both* levels is a limit condition upon the possible existence of an integral dialectic of community. Sixthly, there is needed at the superstructural level an orientation that takes responsibility for the dialectic of community. This orientation addresses the integrity of cultural values at both the superstructural and infrastructural levels and is

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principle to restore an equilibrium." The parenthetical comment is added by the current author. Doran, "The Analogy of Dialectic," 40. The internal quote is from Lonergan, *Insight*, 258.

34 Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 359.

35 *Ibid.*, 361.

36 This is the more concise presentation taken from Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 174–75.



the specialisation of intelligence Lonergan refers to as cosmopolis.<sup>37</sup>

In terms of progress and decline as measured by this structure, Doran offers a helpful summary.<sup>38</sup> By analogy from the dialectic of the subject—in the same manner that sensitivity can suffer a breakdown under misinterpretation of experience—the social schemes that are responsible for the just distribution of vital goods can in fact result in the unjust distribution of vital goods.<sup>39</sup> Again, by analogy from the dialectic of the subject, as a reinterpretation of experience is required to heal a damaged psyche, new technological institutions, economic systems, and political-legal structures are required to promote the just distribution of vital goods. Such a reinterpretation of experience requires new meanings and values to be adopted, and so new social schemes are possible only if new cultural values emerge to motivate and sustain the existence of these new values. And lastly, as the new meanings and values required for a reinterpretation of experience are a function of conversion—religious, moral, intellectual, and psychic—the new cultural values informing the transformed social structures are also a function of individuals' conversions and their originating values.

#### THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR<sup>40</sup>

The Latin American Episcopal Conference's (CELAM) final document at

37 Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 361.

38 *Ibid.*, 96.

39 Whist it is beyond the ambit of this article to dwell too long on the issue, it must be noted that understanding the dialectic of the subject is the key to understanding the analogy of dialectic in general. Accordingly, it can be noted that there exists the basic dialectic of the subject (between neural demands and psychic representation) and also a derived dialectic of the subject, or dialectic of consciousness (between intentionality and psyche). For a more lengthy consideration of the dialectics of the subject, see *ibid.*, 71–77; 177–210.

40 The development of the POFTP can be traced through the entire corpus of Catholic Social Teaching. Its germ is evident in pre-Leonine letters. It begins to crystallize in Leo XIII's watershed encyclical *Rerum novarum*. And John XXIII's challenge to the Second Vatican Council—that it transform the Church into the Church she should be, a Church of the Poor—legitimized pastoral activity that had already been occurring in Latin America, activity that demonstrated the option in practice even if the term itself was yet to be formulated. For the sake of brevity, such a summary of the development of the POFTP cannot be provided here, but can be gleaned from: Joe Holland, *Joe. Modern Catholic Social Teaching: The Popes Confront the Industrial Age, 1740–1958* (Paulist Press, 2003); and, Gerald S. Twomey, *The 'Preferential Option for the Poor' in Catholic Social Thought from John XXIII to John Paul II*. Lewiston (NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005).



Puebla (1979) reaffirmed the stance it took at Medellín (1968) when it asserted "the need for conversion on the part of the whole Church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation."<sup>41</sup> In doing so, the document bore witness to the first Catholic episcopal sanction of the phrase 'preferential option for the poor', despite its being in use among Latin American theologians for years before the meeting of CELAM in Mexico.<sup>42</sup> The terminology was not as readily accepted for use in Vatican documents. It received passing treatment in 1981 in John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, *Familiaris consortio*.<sup>43</sup> But, not until 1985 is there more than peripheral use of the phrase, when a section in the final report of the extraordinary synod was titled "Preferential Option for the Poor and Human Promotion."<sup>44</sup> This signaled a watershed in official use of the expression. Pope John Paul II then explicitly employed it in his social encyclicals *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987) and *Centesimus annus* (1991).

Despite using the phrase, John Paul II suggested that the term is not to be understood in terms of sociological analysis. Rather it indicates "a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity."<sup>45</sup> By contrast, for Liberation Theology the POFTP is not solely a matter of ethical emphasis within Christian ministry (though it certainly includes that emphasis); it is a whole theological method. Theology is grounded in the concrete experience of poor communities whereby praxis is illuminated by doctrine, which generates a transformed social situation ready for new theological understanding. In Liberation Theology two emphases are apparent. Firstly, the POFTP is an hermeneutical principle which facilitates a (re-)reading of the Christian tradition from the underside of history. Secondly, the POFTP focuses Christian praxis upon the needs of the victimized. It is this bifold nature of the POFTP that is intended in this article, both the hermeneutic and the praxis elements stressed by liberation theologians.<sup>46</sup>

41 CELAM, *Evangelisation in Latin America's Present and Future*, #1134.

42 See Justo González, "The Option for the Poor in Latin American Theology," in *Poverty and Ecclesiology*, ed. Anthony Dunnavant (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 9–26.

43 *Familiaris consortio*, §47.

44 "The Church, in the Word of God, Celebrates the Mysteries of Christ for the Salvation of the World," *The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod*, §D6

45 *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §42. See also *Centesimus annus*, §57.

46 Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?*, 32. This also follows Gregory Baum's understanding. See Gregory Baum, "Do We Need a Catholic Sociology?" in *Essays in Critical Theology* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 139–70.

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THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR IN THEOLOGY AND THE DIALECTICS OF  
HISTORY

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The theory of society in *TDH* permits one to clarify critically what the POFTP means (a) in terms of the Church's mission and (b) with respect to the hermeneutically privileged position occupied by the poor in terms of the Church's retrieval of its own tradition.

With respect to the mission of the Church, the relations that obtain within the scale of values—when considered from below upwards—reveal the preferential option for the poor as grounded in transcendental method. Global injustice is *the* foundational problem by which the adequate functioning of all other dialectics is measured. The inadequate distribution of vital goods points to an absence of equitable global schemes of recurrence at the social level. In turn, this absence sets the terms by which global cultural developments can be deemed satisfactory. Cultural developments must be proportionate to the demands of the underlying social dialectic.<sup>47</sup> In short, the equitable distribution of vital values functions as the criterion by which the adequacy of the dialectics of society is measured.<sup>48</sup>

Turning from object to subject, one can note that the analysis of the social situation presented above is conducted from within an horizon which identifies—and responds to—the integral scale of values. Apropos of this observation, with respect to the hermeneutically privileged position of the oppressed in the retrieval of the tradition, one can also note that the scale of values has entered into the upper blade of the heuristic structure.<sup>49</sup> The hermeneutic position is grounded in Lonergan's transcendental perspective. As theologians engage in research, interpretation, history and dialectic, an upper blade is operative that incorporates—particularly from below upwards along the scale—a position of priority for those who are oppressed.

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THE STRENGTHS OF THIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION  
FOR THE POOR

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47 *Ibid.*, 423.

48 It also, more remotely, is the measure of the integrity of the dialectic operative at the level of the individual (beyond the level of society).

49 This phrase refers to Lonergan's scissors 'analogy of knowing' whereby the 'upper blade' is a set of questions and the 'lower blade' the data under consideration. Knowledge is only produced when the blades, subject and object, are brought together.

When it is compared with other means of comprehending the POFTP, several key strengths of Doran's understanding become apparent. Two of these strengths are explicated below.

#### THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AS AN A PRIORI COMPONENT IN SOCIAL ANALYSIS

In Doran's framework, the POFTP functions as an *a priori* element in social analysis. This is in sharp distinction to the understanding of the POFTP by theologians such as Clodovis Boff. Boff's use of the POFTP is seen in what was originally his doctoral dissertation from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.<sup>50</sup> In his thesis, Boff argued that theology is only able to acquire knowledge of the social world via the social sciences.<sup>51</sup> He contends that theology is ill equipped to comment on either the subject matter or the methods of sociology. For Boff, sociology must be left to its own devices and allowed to function independently.<sup>52</sup> Boff seeks to discern which social science a theologian ought to use. He considers only two options: sociologies—and hence social theories—of a functionalist tendency or those of a dialectical or conflictualist tendency (the scientific penetralia of Marxism).<sup>53</sup> Boff assesses these social theories using two criteria, one scientific and the other ethical. The scientific criterion is based on the explanatory power of a social theory in any given situation. By such a canon, functionalism best explains societies worthy of maintaining. Marxism, conversely, can take account of people's suffering, identify the conflict that generates this anguish, and seek a means of resolving a deplorable social situation. In Latin America, conflict dominates the social landscape. And because social discord is conflictualism's heuristic anticipation, only it can do justice to the data. He then moves on to the ethical criterion:

At this point then we must move on to the second type of

50 Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987).

51 Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 31.

52 Ibid., 51–52.

53 Ibid., 57. Boff had previously analysed Marxism with the intention of separating its scientific character from the 'chaff' of the philosophical components. This is a significantly more complex task than Boff admits. See *ibid.*, 55. But when he is speaking of Marxism here, he intends it as a social theory, not a philosophy.



criteria—ethical criteria. The question of ‘scientificness’ raises an antecedent question, one concerned with ideological options and determinate political undertakings, and finally leading to ethics. Before a judgment can be made on the explicative value of a theory, one must determine the concrete problems this theory claims to explain. The actual determination of these problems implies a decision of an ethical sort.<sup>54</sup>

Using the POFTP as a guiding principle, only conflictualist social theory reads history—including the concrete present—in such a manner as to give the poor a voice. Ethically, it is the POFTP that provides a mandate for the selection of conflictualism. Based on these two criteria, Boff duly concludes that conflictualism is the only suitable social theory to adopt in a Latin American context.<sup>55</sup> What is to be noted is that only in making an ethical decision does Boff refer to the POFTP. It comes ‘after’ scientific analysis and is, for Boff, a matter solely of faith, not of reason.

Doran’s use of the scale of values and dialectic to ground the POFTP stands in marked contrast to Boff’s approach. In a critical realist approach, values are essential to the scientific nature of social theory because—in the limit case—complete understanding is the goal of all scientific disciplines. If reality is the world mediated by meaning and motivated by value,<sup>56</sup> to exclude values is to bracket elements of reality and thus to produce a truncated and erroneous scientific theory. For Doran, the POFTP enters the upper blade of social analysis as part of the scale of values. It is, in this sense, potentially transcultural and not solely a Christian doctrine received by faith. In contrast to Boff, the POFTP is knowable prior to revelation. If one builds on the foundation of *TDH*, the POFTP is not ‘tacked on’ to reality by virtue of appeal to revelation, and it belongs to a set of general categories, not to a special theological set.

It is beyond the scope of this article to explore fully the ramifications of this understanding of the POFTP. But it is reasonable to conclude that this is a radical stance with sweeping relevance for socio-cultural analysis at the micro- and macro-societal levels, for both religious and non-religious social institutions. Can a parish, diocese, or Church be called Christian if it does not implement social structures proportionate to the demands

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54 Ibid., 58.

55 Ibid., 56–58.

56 Lonergan, *Method*, 265.

the POFTP? Can the POFTP be included in a more aggressive Charter of Human Rights on the basis of its *a priori* status? What was identified in the work of liberation theologians as a fringe position is, according to *TDH*, truly fundamental and universal.

#### UNITY AND DIFFERENCE: BEYOND FUNCTIONALISM AND CONFLICTUALISM

In terms of their influence and dominance in the academy, two of the most significant strands of social theory are functionalist (liberal) and conflictualist (those derived from Marxist thought).<sup>57</sup> Doran's reading of the option for the poor points to a significant strength of *TDH* over other means of constructing an understanding of the doctrine of the POFTP, and it is thus worth briefly sketching these two social theories so that these strengths can be illustrated.

Functionalist social theories have as part of their upper blade the assumption that "societies can be seen as persistent, cohesive, stable, generally integrated wholes, differentiated by their cultural and social-structural arrangements."<sup>58</sup> In this manner, functionalist social theories tend to anticipate harmony to an extent that they are unable to address the issue of social decline. Whilst functionalism tends not to openly deal with the issue of values, implicit in its perspective is the identification of evil with that which disrupts harmony. Any kind of dissent, such as minority voices, can be silenced under the justification as a threat to the survival of the whole. Moreover, in anticipating only unity and harmony, there is a tendency to ascribe intelligibility to that which is not intelligible, i.e., the social surd. Functionalist sociologies are inherently conservative—their heuristic anticipation is integration and harmony—and the result is often the maintenance of the *status quo*.

A functionalist understanding of the POFTP is evident in the work of Michael Novak. Novak's stance is not overtly functionalist, but the organic nature of his social theory is apparent in his criticism of Liberation Theology.

57 Issues related to the use of sociology in theology are clearly presented in Neil Ormerod, "A Dialectic Engagement with the Social Sciences in an Ecclesiological Context," *Theological Studies* 66:4 (2005), 815–40.

58 E.C. Cuff, W.W. Sharrock and D.W. Francis, *Perspectives in Sociology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 1990), 27.

This is most obvious in Novak's criticism of Liberation Theology's adoption of Marxist categories, most notably from the Marxist philosophy of history. For Marx, struggle between classes is the fundamental interpretive key of history. History witnesses, at its basic level, to the conflict between oppressor and oppressed.<sup>59</sup> But this proposes an ontology of darkness, division, and brute force which is incompatible with the Christian ontology of a fundamentally good creation that is only affected secondarily – though not rendered evil – by human sin.<sup>60</sup> He contends:

The aim both of democratic capitalism as the liberal societies of North America conceive of it, and of socialism as the liberation theologians of Latin America conceive of it, is to lift up the poor. The theology of both the Americas is 'an option for the poor.' The radical question is a practical one. Which sorts of economic institutions, in fact, do lift up the poor?<sup>61</sup>

Rather than giving a conflictual reading of society in which the POFTP is interpreted in terms of class conflict, Novak argues that the POFTP is better understood in terms of the economic 'freedom' available to the poor in the United States of America. Given such entrepreneurial freedom – there is clear Pelagian tenor to Novak's work – the poor can liberate themselves and climb from poverty. Together, in North American capitalism, the poor and the elite benefit from the creation of wealth and this is the true means of liberation. Although Novak seems convinced that liberal metaphysics, and *ipso facto* its social theory, can accommodate an understanding of conflict, all instances of social discord in history can be understood as the victims blaming others for their situation rather than taking responsibility for their own destiny.<sup>62</sup>

Conflictualism has as part of its upper blade the assumption that the primary characteristic of society is conflict. "Social life is viewed in terms of divisiveness, conflict, hostility and coercion which are inevitably generated by the fact that social organization creates different involvement and interests for people."<sup>63</sup> Conflictualist social theorists more readily admit

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59 Michael Novak, *Will it Liberate? Questions about Liberation Theology?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 109.

60 *Ibid.*, 110.

61 *Ibid.*, 6.

62 *Ibid.*, 142–153; 202–204.

63 *Ibid.*, 106.



that their analyses are motivated by ethical concerns. But in adopting its hermeneutic of suspicion, conflictualism employs an heuristic anticipation of conflict without any conception of a pure line of progress. The genuinely constructive elements of society – those that promote genuine progress – are reduced to the issue of competing interests. In this manner, conflictualist social theory can normalize conflict, and even promote violence that simply compounds decline in a society.

All mainline Liberation Theology adopts a conflictualist social theory as a means of reading society. Gustavo Gutiérrez, in *A Theology of Liberation*, writes

The Latin American reality, *the historical moment* which Latin America is experiencing, is *deeply conflictual*. One of Medellín's great merits is to have been rooted in this reality and to have expressed it in terms surprisingly clear and accessible for an ecclesiastical document. Medellín marks the beginning of a new relationship between theological and pastoral language on the one hand and the social sciences which seek to interpret this reality on the other.<sup>64</sup>

The POFTP is thus constructed in terms of solidarity with the victims of the conflict inherent in society. This conflict may be construed in a directly or a derivatively Marxist manner. Nevertheless Liberation Theology's criterion of selection of a social theory is the theory's ability to meaningfully interpret a society where violence and oppression is the norm and not the exception. The selection of any other social theory results in a failure to meet both scientific and moral exigencies.<sup>65</sup> A functionalist approach understands poverty as backwardness, positing that, given time and liberty, the market will lift the poor from their plight.<sup>66</sup> Functionalism explains little of the social situation, and leaves the poor to languish in destitution not of their own making.

When contrasted with the possible understandings of the POFTP that emerge from within functionalist and conflictualist perspectives, Doran's understanding of the POFTP is significantly richer. Doran's *TDH* contains an

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64 Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, Rev. Ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), 74. The emphasis is Gutiérrez's own.

65 Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (London: Burns & Oats, 1987), 24–27.

66 *Ibid.*, 26.

explicit means of accounting for the POFTP that comprehensively addresses the issue of values in social theory. Furthermore, Doran in *TDH* can clearly distinguish between progress and decline. This is unlike functionalism, which cannot account for any evil other than that which compromises harmony (and hence Novak's criticism of Liberation Theology). For Novak the POFTP means that 'liberation of the poor' simply entails their integration into the higher echelons of capitalist society. This results in the normalization of the social surd. The ability to diagnose distortion and progress at the cultural and social level results from a critically nuanced upper blade that does not force a notion of harmony on a social situation that may include "false facts."

Unlike conflictualism, *TDH* is able to suggest an interpretation of the POFTP that does more than identify conflict in society so that Christians can stand in solidarity with the victims. Doran's position presents an account of a line of pure progress. It provides a means of comprehending deviation from that progress, *viz.*, when what ought to function as dialectics of contraries function as dialectics of contradictories. Moreover, being able to distinguish between dialectics of contraries and contradictories, and having these function as part of an upper blade, permits Doran to distinguish between constructive dialectical relationships and destructive ones in a way that conflictualism cannot. By implementing Doran's approach in *TDH*, the criticism that the POFTP is partisan and divisive can be avoided. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) expressed this concern in the second document aimed at warning against dangers of the Liberation Theology movement. The CDF was concerned that theologians who adopted a conflictualist social theory were interpreting the POFTP in a manner that pitted Christians against each other.

The special option for the poor, far from being a sign of particularism or sectarianism, manifests the universality of the Church's being and mission. This option excludes no one. This is the reason why the Church cannot express this option by means of reductive sociological and ideological categories which would make this preference a partisan choice and a source of conflict.<sup>67</sup>

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67 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, §68.

From the perspective of *TDH*, the POFTP can be understood in a manner that does not gloss over conflict—there are dialectics of contradictories—but also avoids positing conflict as a primordial reality in which the POFTP appears as a call to arms.

#### CONCLUSION

*Theology and the Dialectics of History*, which is grounded in Lonergan's critical realism and (Christian/religious) anthropology, contains an understanding of the elements of society that serves to ground the upper blade of an explanatory social theory. This article's preliminary exploration of two key strengths of this approach has demonstrated the potency of Doran's social theory within his broader theory of history. The foundation built by Doran is able to support an understanding of the preferential option for the poor that is considerably more adequate than competing attempts. Perhaps most importantly, Doran's approach is able to accord the POFTP an *a priori* status that not only matches the significance that the doctrine has been given in Liberation Theology and Catholic Social Teaching but, in fact, grounds the POFTP as truly universal. Moreover, Doran's stance on the Reign of God means that the POFTP is reconciled within a perspective that is significantly more potent as an explanatory system than the competing alternatives of functionalism and conflictualism. Thus, with Jon Sobrino it can be noted that for Doran, the Reign of God is to be built in history as a partial construction of the definitive Reign of God.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, Doran provides a cogent Christian, indeed potentially deeply inter-religious, foundation that permits an understanding of exactly what constitutes progress toward the Reign and deviation from the realization of the Reign. Doran is able to understand the Reign of God such that, from above, what moves all goodness is God's gracious gift of himself. But from below, in *TDH*, the litmus test of all authenticity—social, cultural, and personal—is the treatment of the poor.

68 He writes, "In the last analysis, what Liberation Theology says is that the Reign of God is to be built in history—together with other human beings, hence the radical ecumenism of the concept of the Reign of God—and that, in the light of faith, we see ourselves to be on the road, as we accomplish this partial construction, to the definitive Reign of God." John Sobrino, "The Central Position of the Reign of God in Liberation Theology," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*. Edited by I. Ellacuria and J. Sobrino. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 386.





# RECONSTRUCTING FOUNDATIONS: AN INSIGHT-BASED APPROACH TO CONSTRUCTIVISM AND CONSTRUCTIONISM IN EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

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## INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM

IT CAN BE safely said that *a* goal or aim of education is to facilitate the formation of insights in our students for the purpose of grounding informed action within a number of diverse yet inter-related subject-areas or fields. Students are instructed in various curricula such as mathematics, language arts, social studies, science, music, art, etc. within an integrated, curricular framework for the purpose of helping them decide what to believe (knowledge formation) and what to do (active citizenship). Whether or not students are having insights into the nature of triangles, falling bodies, the meanings of poems, historical events or how to vote, they do so from within an integrated learning environment. Accordingly, insights arise when one is engaged with external subjects, fields or domains that are, by definition, overlapping and co-extensive.

If this is the case, the question for Faculties of Education becomes, How to best prepare pre-service teaches for this kind of integrative teaching? One approach called constructivism, focuses upon internal principles of learning and thinking as researched by schools of educational psychology. Herein, a foundational goal is to identify how students construct knowledge; what their learning, thinking, reading, and listening styles look like, and then, and only then, suggest ways a teacher might organize her lessons and units accordingly. This type of constructivist research sees the student as being more likely to arrive at insights the teacher has pre-selected for learning than

if she were to start elsewhere. Preparation for pre-service teachers within this framework sees, as foundational, the identification of the relevant psychological processes and as *subsequent*, instructional models designed to teach *to and for* those processes. Consequently, in the first year of their program, many pre-service student-teachers are required to take courses in learning theory, educational psychology, psychological models of learning assessment, developmental and atypical psychology, etc.

But what happens to the status of subject-area knowledge? What about its impact on students' learning within this constructivist paradigm? Is mathematical, scientific, literary, historical, economic, political and/or philosophical knowledge and thinking to be reduced to a set of psychological processes without any external reference? Is constructivist thought, therefore, restrictively *uni-directional*? Importantly, are students to believe that subject-area knowledge is just the product of their own personal cognitive development? In other words, how does this approach avoid falling into some form of *cognocentric solipsism*?

Constructionists are not unaware of these difficulties. For example, constructionist thought in education argues that external, cultural products of thought themselves (language, music, artifacts, etc.) can formatively impact a student's internal, psychological processes. Hence, are those psychological processes basic to constructivism as foundational as they maintain? If not, might pre-service and graduate teacher training begin with in-depth, content-area knowledge, and use that to ground psychological principles of learning where necessary?

Generally, at this point, we can suggest a basic set of questions needing answers:

- Are psychological processes grounded in constructivist psychology foundational to education?
- Rather, is content-area knowledge with its formative impact on those processes themselves the true foundations of education both ontologically and epistemologically?
- Should we build pre-service and graduate teacher education programs upon constructivism or constructionism?
- Or, can we build on both of them, and if so, how?

In the following sections, the basic tenets of constructivism and constructionism are outlined, making a case for both while concluding with



a set of unresolved problems that Lonergan's notion of insight effectively addresses. Using Lonergan, I argue that constructivism and constructionism are co-foundational for pre-service and graduate teacher education, and, ultimately, for educational theory and practice itself.

#### BUILDING THE CASE FOR CONSTRUCTIVISM IN EDUCATION

Many researchers in education believe the best pedagogical practices begin with how the student understands and experiences a concept, event, artifact, activity or phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> Historically, it's been argued that structuring teaching this way is a better approach than one which begins with abstract concepts that have little relevance to students' lives.<sup>2</sup> Also, professional development theory in education argues that *autobiographic praxis* which focuses on *teachers'* experiences of their own thinking can help them take better control of their teaching.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, for the constructivist, learning behavior is a function of neural activity itself that can be a central focus of research into how children learn.<sup>4</sup>

In educational theory and practice, this emphasis gets translated into a central and primary focus upon the students' internal, psychological principles of learning as a way of developing *best practices* in teaching. By starting with a student's "inner", mental processes, the teacher can apply a range of psychologically grounded activities to the learning context.<sup>5</sup> Constructivists often refer to such an approach as *brain-based* or *brain-*

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1 Ehrlen, Karin, "Children's Understanding of Globes as a Model of the Earth: A Problem of Contextualizing," in *International Journal of Science Education*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2008), 223-240. Mackenzie, Jim, "Conceptual Learning in Higher Education: Some Philosophical Points," in *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2008), 75-87.

2 Esler, Mary. K., Esler, William (2000) *Teaching Elementary Science: A Full Spectrum* (Wadsworth Group. Belmont, CA. USA., 2000), 26; Sivertsen, M. L., *Transforming ideas for teaching and learning science: A guide for elementary science education* (Washington DC: Office of Research, 1993), 6.

3 Butt, Richard, "Autobiographic Praxis and Self-Education: From Alienation to Authenticity," in J. Willinsky, (ed.), *The Educational Legacy of Romanticism* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1990), 257-287.

4 For a current in-depth analysis of the neurophysiology of learning see Kolb, Bryan, *Fundamentals of Human Neuropsychology, Improving the Mind and Brain & The Hidden Mind* (Worth Publishers, USA., 2004); Kolb, Bryan, *Introduction to Brain and Behavior & Foundations of Behavioral Neuroscience* (Worth Publishers, USA, 2005).

5 Henson, Kenneth, *Curriculum Planning: Integrating Multiculturalism, Constructivism and Education Reform* (Waveland Press, Inc., New Jersey, 2005), 115-125.

*dependent* learning and teaching.<sup>6</sup> In constructivist classrooms, students are encouraged to apply prior learning to new situations; to seek a *goodness of fit* between these brain-based processes and new experiences and/or insights.

One can see why constructivism will acknowledge that learning has both public and private components but argue that the *public* learning component is secondary to the processes involved in *private* learning. When students make meaning of their personal interactions with public realities, they bring those processes *to* the knowledge-creation process.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the private learning component is prior to and determinant of its public expressions.

For our purposes, it is important to focus on the emphasis constructivism gives to internal, psychological processes that are considered primary and warrant-conferring. That is, for constructivism in education, the internal psychological make-up of the learner gets primacy when making decisions about the kinds of public knowledge to be brought into the learning environment, the nature of the activities deemed appropriate to engage a student's learning, and the manner of assessment used to determine if any learning has occurred.

Constructivism in education begins with and focuses upon a basic set of internal psychological principles used to ground educational theory and practice in the following ways:

- curriculum is a fallible body of knowledge designed to allow students' internal psychological processes to evolve at developmentally appropriate stages,
- instruction (best practice) is derivative of and parasitic upon psychological processes,
- assessment, quantitatively and qualitatively, measures the presence of those psychological processes,
- learning is authentic when it mirrors a basic set of pre-selected,

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6 Jensen, Eric, *Brain-Based Learning: The New Science of Teaching and Training*, Revised Edition, Corwin Press USA, 2000), 12-15; Crawford, Glenda B., *Brain-Based Teaching With Adolescent Learning in Mind*. Corwin Press. USA, 2007), 11-19.

7 Airasian, P. W. & Walsh, M. E., "Constructivist cautions," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78 (1997), 444-449; McCarthy, S. J. & Raphael, T. E., "Alternative research perspectives," in J. W. Irwin and M. A. Doyle (Eds.), *Reading/Writing Connections: Learning: from research*, (Newark, NJ., 1992), 2-30.

psychological principles at developmentally appropriate stages,

- pre-service and graduate teacher education are grounded upon, and evaluated by those psychological foundations basic to constructivism.

#### BUILDING THE CASE FOR CONSTRUCTIONISM IN EDUCATION

Constructionism in education, on the other hand, isn't so quick to ground everything on a set of psychological, brain-based processes. It stresses the importance and impact of pre-existent public *products* on those supposedly primary psychological processes. As well, it complicates the issue of where to lay the foundations for teacher education. Should teacher education, and education in general, be grounded in constructivist or perhaps, constructionist thought, or in some combination of both? If in both, how?

Unlike constructivism, *constructionism* in education considers as primary the impact of *external* and *shared* educational constructs on the child.<sup>8</sup> A constructionist approach to teaching suggests that knowledge may develop best when learners are engaged in the construction of something external or at least shareable: sand castles, poems, LEGO machines, or computer programs.<sup>9</sup> These products become evidence for the teacher that the student has met the lesson's goals, that the student has demonstrated mastery of the relevant objectives.

In turn, those same products (for our purposes: constructions) become reinforcing for the student. She sees herself producing them and *in them*. As such, they have a deeply formative impact on her. She begins to identify with those constructions: they become external manifestations of deep internal, psychological realities. At the same time, however, they impact those internal realities, transforming them and re-shaping them according to the physical, linguistic, or symbolic properties basic to those constructions themselves.

Importantly, this process is present on a much larger scale, moving

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8 Willett, Rebekah, "Technology, Pedagogy and Digital Production: A Case Study of Children Learning New Media Skills," in *Learning, Media and Technology*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2007), 167-181.

9 Harel, I., *Children Designers: Interdisciplinary Constructions for Learning and Knowing Mathematics in a Computer-Rich School*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1991), 204.



from the individual level towards the social. Constructions such as symbols, cultural myths, institutional practices and rules comprise our personal and communal world-views, identities, purposes, ideologies, and ultimately, realities.<sup>10</sup> In turn, these constructions can *re-create* and *transform* our world-views, identities, purposes, ideologies, and ultimately, realities.<sup>11</sup> For example, as our notions of what a school is or what it means to be educated changes through interaction with diverse elements of an external and shared reality, so does its perceived meaning and value. This change produces new structures that, in turn, transform the subject who lives in them.<sup>12</sup>

What is considered to be *best practice* in education is not removed from these influences. Curricula or the subject-matter which students are supposed to demonstrate mastery of, put into practice, and carry forward into their lives, is a construction. It is a constructed field of the *best* knowledge produced by communities of *experts* whose insights determine what counts as warranted/unwarranted, good/bad, reliable/unreliable, etc. Although these constructions involve psychological processes, for constructionists they are not *solely* determined by them.

For example, a child-centered, constructionist classroom is organized in a very different manner from a constructivist classroom. A constructionist classroom will be product-focused: centered upon the production of public and shared products in dialogue with the best insights from the experts in the field, be it science, literature, history, music, art, philosophy, theology, etc. In turn, teaching materials are selected on the grounds of excellence as determined by those experts, and not primarily on developmental student readiness. The notion of student readiness central to a constructivist classroom becomes a consideration but not a determining factor.

Inside a constructionist classroom, excellence is present when a student commits herself to learning the best available forms of knowledge in the relevant subject-area within her particular cultural/academic community.

10 Gubrium J. A. and Holstein, Jaber F., "The Constructionist Mosaic," in Gubrium J. A. and Holstein, Jaber F., *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (Guilford Press, NY, NY, 2008), 3-13.

11 Faubion, James and Marcus, George, "Constructionism in Anthropology," in Gubrium, J., Holstein, J.F., *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (Guilford Press, NY, NY, 2008), 67-85.

12 Butler, Judith, "Identity, Deconstruction and Politics," in Gergen, M., and Gergen, K., *Social Construction; A Reader* (SAGE, London, UK, 2003), 129-132.

Physics education, for example, becomes a content-based activity that stresses the thoughtful replication of successful physics experiments. Language arts education, in turn, emphasizes exposing children to excellent forms of literature (as determined by the experts in the field) for the purpose of facilitating the deepening of their literacy skills and appreciation of literature. *Most subtly*, this kind of classroom directs the teacher to focus her teaching on the students' learning the *best available subject-matter*, and not on their *learning* any selection of available subject-matter. A constructivist teacher, on the other hand, would consistently apply brain-based criteria of student-readiness in her selection of course materials. Any input from subject-area specialists would be considered but not given priority.

In response, a constructionist teacher would argue that the quality of *excellent* knowledge is neglected in a strictly constructivist approach to education. The socio-historical, political and philosophical subtleties of *specific* authors are potentially lost in constructivist classrooms. For example, the historical, literary and philosophical background necessary to understand *King Lear* become secondary to finding ways of motivating the student to write about his own *impression* of the text, independently of any concentrated effort to provide a context for the play. Many reader-response approaches to language arts education organize instruction this way.<sup>13</sup> Historical, socio-political or literary context is secondary to students making meaning of narrative or expository texts by reference to their own personal experience or impressions of the text.

But is this approach a bad thing? Although protective of what is deemed excellent in a specific subject-area, is constructionism's focus on *excellence* too content-driven? Does a constructionist classroom properly attend to the student's own experience of coming to know, of having insights, of making meaning out of her personal experiences? Or, does its focus on public knowledge, however excellent, marginalize and suppress the student's *own* emerging sense of excellence and self-worth? In Lonergan's language, does it facilitate the appropriation of her own dynamic self-consciousness? As well, does it encourage her community's commitment to self-appropriation?

Or, possibly, is constructionism itself simply (1) another organized, localized, externalist approach which imposes pre-existent forms of

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13 Eckart, L.S., *How does it mean? Engaging reluctant readers through literary theory* (NH, USA, 2006), 63.

what is judged to be excellent upon the student by "experts", thereby (2) systematically alienating her from her own lived-experience, and (3) ultimately shaping a fragmented and disjointed future for herself and potentially, for her community? Moreover, is this the kind of classroom that Faculties of Education want to foster and perpetuate in their undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs? As mentioned earlier, this problem applies to education in general.

Nevertheless, hopefully neither constructivism nor constructionism in education *necessarily* entails such dismal outcomes. The student's personal acts of making meaning out of her experiences are primary in the minds of discerning educators. But so is the desire to expose students to the best available public products in their classrooms. So where might an educator (school/university) or a Faculty of Education in the business of training future educators find an approach that helps students experience the ongoing construction of their own stories, be they scientific, mathematical, philosophical, autobiographical, *while* getting exposure to the best available insights in those subject-areas? Without such an approach, educators risk either succumbing to some form of *constructivist* solipsism which sees everything as simply a product of internal, brain-based activities or a *constructionism* which claims knowledge is the product of external albeit *excellent* social forces and constructs beyond the student's control.

At this stage I would like to propose that Lonergan's theory of insight is an effective response to this dilemma. *Insight as experienced* attends to both the *psychological, brain-based processes* central to constructivism while, simultaneously, taking into serious consideration constructionism's focus on *the impact of external products on those psychological processes*. Essentially, Lonergan's phenomenology of insight translates the notion that *thinking is always thinking about something* into an internally coherent model that maintains a creative tension-in-unity between constructivist and constructionist approaches to educational theory and practice. So, how does Lonergan's notion of insight do this?

#### INSIGHT TO THE RESCUE

First, there are many ways of understanding insight. Some see it in reference to Darwinian theory, investment theory, punctuated equilibrium, and



even the kinetic theory of gases.<sup>14</sup> The numerous approaches to insight and the metaphors used to describe it suggest there is a fundamental disagreement regarding what insight is and how it works. Others, however, suggest that insight needs multiple analogies to highlight its multifaceted nature.<sup>15</sup> To use an old proverb, where one explanation of an experience can shine a spotlight, numerous ones can light up a stage. As such, this paper favors the *multiple accounts of a single phenomenon* approach to insight, avoiding either constructivist or constructionist forms of reductionism.

Given that insight, for Lonergan, is basically that which puts an end to the tension of inquiry into anything, it remains a *personal* constructive act of intelligence in response to appropriate questions and is dependent on suitable sensations or images.<sup>16</sup> As such, it is produced by the *interaction* of an inquisitive mind with established cultural and/or natural constructs. Since insights arise out of the tension of inquiry and are a function not of outer circumstances but inner conditions, there remains the potential for continual and open exchange between constructionist and constructivist research.<sup>17</sup>

For our purposes, it is important to highlight that prior to the insight is the perception of sensible or imagined data: input from the senses and/or consciousness, such as acts of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling and/or feelings and mental images. Lonergan's notion of data, therefore, is neither *strictly* constructivist nor constructionist. Rather, data itself is a clever synthesis of internal psychological processes and pre-existent objects of thought coming together in a moment of insight.

Unlike constructionist thought in education, Lonergan doesn't view data as the building blocks of reality, as being "already out there" in space and time impacting us at various levels. Rather, data are what we ask questions about. It engages the student, focusing her psychological processes upon external or internal realities. Neither is data *just* that which is produced by

14 Davidson, J., and Sternberg, R., *The Nature of Insight* (MIT Press, USA, 1996), 7.

15 Felman, S., *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 65-97.

16 Lonergan, B., *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*. Vol. 3 of *Collected works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. F.E. Crowe & R. M. Doran, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 28-31. Tekippe, T., *What is Lonergan up to in Insight? A Primer* (Liturgical Press, Minnesota, USA, 1996), 34-44.; Flanagan, Joe, *Quest for Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Lonergan's Philosophy* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Canada, 1997), 16-23.

17 Lonergan, B., *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, 28.

the student's mental operations as constructivism seems to suggest.

Insight, on the other hand, has a refreshing bi-directionality. The act of having an insight allows the student to explicitly address the nature, operations and experiences of those psychological principles *co-producing* her insight. This would enhance her meta-cognitive self-awareness. Or, she can attend to the external, concrete and public products her psychological processes create or operate upon. In turn, those public and/or constructed products can become co-producers of future insights. Neither the mental processes nor the public products themselves, however, can produce the insight in isolation from one another. But how does this inter-dependence occur?

Within Lonergan's phenomenology of insight, this *joint activity* involving mental operations and public products is possible on account of the *pivotal* function of insight.<sup>18</sup> Since insight can act as a pivot, as a point of contact between the concrete and the abstract, the internal and the external (the constructivist and the constructionist), there is potential for a *unity in difference* approach that maintains the differences between constructionism and constructivism while integrating them into a single functional but differentiated whole.

For example, if insight can act as a pivot between constructivist and constructionist schools of thought, establishing co-foundations for education, there need not be competition for a place in the *Foundations* sun. Foundations courses in Faculties of Education are traditionally reserved for subjects such as philosophy, history and sociology of education. But educational psychology claims to be truly *foundational* since its primary focus is on learning theory, instruction, and models of student assessment, the stock and trade of educational theory and practice. Hence, traditional Foundations courses such as philosophy, sociology, or history of education aren't as foundational as one might think. So let's replace them with psychology courses. But must such a competition exist?

Given the bi-directionality of insight, Faculties of Education (and other Faculties as well) can *re-design* courses around the specifics of this new model, developing graduate and undergraduate programs which effectively maintain this *unity-in-difference*. In effect, the model preserves and deepens the co-foundational relations between constructivism's focus

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18 Lonergan, B., *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, 28.

on psychological processes and constructionism's emphasis on the impact of public products. Simultaneously, therefore, classroom instruction and curriculum development get supported by processes basic to insight formation *and* the best public knowledge available engaging those processes, without excluding or sublating either approach.

As such, the basic relation between the two approaches becomes one of open, flexible and fluid movement buttressed by an on-going and informed interactivity. The best features of their differences are maintained and passed on by virtue of a malleable, dynamic and inter-related process that continually *informs* the other.

For example, in the history classroom, the teacher would select the most credible historical accounts of the event in question, and *use* them to develop the student's historical thinking. The teacher directs the student to be attentive to her own mental acts while focusing on relevant data, intelligently creating a narrative of the event, and reasonably judging its truth-value. History, therefore, isn't seen only as a public product created by a community of historians that students passively absorb (the *one damned thing after another* approach to history education). Nor is it taught as just something anyone can do just as well as anyone else (the *just another story approach*). Rather, it is viewed as an accumulation of carefully constructed insights arising from within an established content-area that makes effective use of a set of disciplined mental processes.

Curriculum and the language used to *talk* about it, therefore, quickly become significant. A teacher needs to have a set of exemplary materials (accumulated insights) to use in the classroom if she wants to enhance her students' critical, historical, mathematical, scientific or literary thinking skills (psychological processes). Curriculum, therefore, isn't reduced to a "great books approach." Nor is it simply a set of psychological processes (a pure skills approach) students are led through at developmentally appropriate stages. Curriculum becomes both that which is excellent in *content* and in *thinking*.

By attending to the image of insights as pivotal, and valuing the *unity-in-difference* approach it fosters, the teacher can maintain an effective balance between processes and content. Hence, she can select when to focus on being a constructivist educator and when to be a constructionist one, moving fluidly between brain-based processes and external products



impacting those brain-based processes, without having one necessarily marginalize or cancel out the other.

As well, the *pivotal* role of Lonergan's notion of reflective insight becomes especially useful for educators working in critical thinking theory and practice. Like a pivot, reflective insight allows one to attend to public products that need to be critically reflected upon as well as to those inner skills and attitudes basic to *deep* critical thinking from within a differentiated unity.

For example, constructivists view critical thinking as essentially metacognitive in nature, as mental activities wherein students think about their own thinking in a particularly deliberative manner independently of context or subject matter.<sup>19</sup> They consider it to be highly generalizable across fields, domains, and subject areas.

Constructionists, however, would see critical thinking differently. Consistently, they might view it as being context-bound or domain-specific, arguing for an epistemological subject-specificity. Judgments arising from acts of critical thinking are constructed by the particular academic community producing them. Herein, attention to generalist psychological principles active in forming reflective insights becomes secondary to the specific cultures, fields, or subject-areas constructing them. Hence, thinking critically about mathematics in the United States becomes something very different from thinking critically about music in New Zealand. Unfortunately, without a concomitant emphasis on those processes co-responsible for the existence of subject-areas themselves (math and/or music) such an approach reduces critical thinking to its content, making any generalizability of critical thinking across disciplines next to impossible.

Using Lonergan, we need not go down that epistemological road in education. We can argue that psychological activities, such as critical thinking and the constructs it is thinking critically about, need not be mutually exclusive. They are both well accommodated within Lonergan's notion of a *reflective insight*.<sup>20</sup> Understood as a mental act of reasoned judgment in response to a question for reflection operating upon a pre-existent object of thought, the notion of a reflective insight is useful for making sense of

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19 Maki, R.H., and McGuire, M.J., "Metacognition for text; findings and implications for education," in Perfect, T.J. and Schwartz, B. L., *Applied Metacognition* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 39-44.

20 Lonergan, B., *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, 305-308

what it means to *do* critical thinking. While explicitly attending to those skill sets commonly attributed to critical thinking - posing questions to one's understanding of data, weighing evidence, reasonably judging, verifying, checking for validity, etc.<sup>21</sup> - a reflective insight remains product-focused. It is always intimately connected to the subject-matter it is operating upon and the subject or person having the reflective insight itself. There isn't an *implicit* dualism between the thinking subject (as in constructivism) and its object of thought (as in constructionism).

Nevertheless, whether or not a teacher is discussing the nature of reflective insight in math or music, the basic cognitional processes remain constant. Hence, as is the case with post-foundationalist approaches to rationality, one can remain context-sensitive (the math or music classroom) without de-contextualizing the process.<sup>22</sup> Acts of reflective insight have both *subject-specific* and *generalizable* qualities that protect and maintain the central *unity-in-difference* necessary to sustain that fluid movement between constructivist and constructionist thought.

Lastly, if Lonergan's notion of insight is to make a significant contribution to the re-structuring of educational foundations, it must attend to the role of authenticity. If authenticity is understood as the sustained effort to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving, one is less likely to speak authentically and act inauthentically; like integrity, there is a required consistency between word and deed. If a research culture (an educational research culture for our purposes) has that consistency between who it says it is and what it does, it has integrity and, by extension, a *measure* of authenticity. Its degree or measure of authenticity would be determined by how sustained its efforts to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving have become within the school, Faculty of Education, or entire university.

Our constructivist and constructionist co-foundations for education are authentic, therefore, to the degree they institutionally attend to being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving. If authentic, they will more likely than not *internalize* that consistency between what they say they stand for (their words) and the kinds of pre-service teacher education

21 Moon, Jennifer, *Critical Thinking: An Exploration of Theory and Practice* (Routledge, New York, New York, 2008), 21-23.

22 Healey, Paul., *Rationality, Hermeneutics And Dialogue: Toward A Viable Postfoundationalist Account Of Rationality* (Ashgate, Hampshire, England, 2005), 16.

programs they create (their deeds). As these authentic co-foundations become part of the school or university they become enculturated and potentially transformative. As culturally transformative they can in turn effect public policy, changing that policy in a manner which may see Lonergan's notion of authenticity become legislation in some school districts.

If Lonergan's notions of insight and its extension into the area of authenticity are of value, this paper may have succeeded in demonstrating a way constructivism's focus on internal, psychological activities and constructionism's attention to the impact of public products on those internal processes can be co-foundational for education and for pre-service teacher education programs.

Further study along these lines could explore how these two schools of thought can get translated into a pedagogy designed to foster a school culture's *transformative authenticity*. In turn, it could be demonstrated how an insight-based pedagogy might be a useful approach to developing *change agency* among teachers. As *authentic* change agents, teachers in all areas of education (K-16) may be less resistant to forms of transformational leadership.

Consequently, researching how *insight into insight* can be translated into a *holistic research methodology* that can operate upon both constructionist and constructivist data is a worthwhile and much needed pursuit. Current approaches to triangulation in research methodology remain restricted to quantitative and qualitative forms of inquiry. By bringing Lonergan's work into dialogue with this area of research the conversation can only broaden, thereby deepening the impact of his influence on educational theory and practice.



## ALIENATION, THE UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS, AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN HEGEL AND LONERGAN

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IN MODERN CULTURE, the notion of the 'self' has gained a prominence unknown in ancient and medieval times. Along with this focus on selfhood come the questions of how an isolated self is to relate to reality, or how an already decentered and worldly human subjectivity is to maintain its integrity as a self. The contemporary philosophical scene is concerned with the subject's relation to the human other or to the human community at large. But there is an older question, no longer asked in contemporary culture: that question concerns the relation of the human subject to the divine. No longer asked, but what is more, purportedly already answered in the self-assurances of contemporary humanisms: the idea of God, they assure us, is not fundamentally important to the meaning of human nature and destiny; religion is a matter of personal preference, and one can become a mature and realized self without such personal idiosyncracies as faith and religious conviction. More virulent forms of secularism go further in asserting that religion keeps human beings from realizing their full potential. Whence originated this enmity between the self and God?

One of the strains of thought that inspired these positions was Hegel's doctrine of the Unhappy Consciousness, a self-consciousness that is estranged from its own selfhood by the interference of an abstract idea of God as a being who is alien to one's own subjectivity. Hegel describes such a consciousness as "one which knows that it is the dual consciousness of itself, as self-liberating, unchangeable, and self-identical, *and* as self-bewildering and self-perverting, and it is the awareness of this self-contradictory nature

of itself."<sup>1</sup> What is more, this split consciousness is *not* aware that this contradiction is reconcilable by the sublation of the abstraction that holds essential selfhood before self-consciousness as something other than its own self. Consciousness therefore interprets itself as inessential, finite, sinful, and most importantly, dependent upon something external to its own self. How could humanity come into its own under such a tutelage of identity? The concern to reconcile human subjectivity and freedom in general with the rest of reality inspired Hegel to build his idealist system in an attempt to show that all reality, divine and human, nature and history, is the manifestation of one Spirit, who is the universal Individual and the only true Self, who is known to human knowing (and who knows himself through human self-knowing) and who acts through human freedom. To know God and to act for and as God could release the Unhappy Consciousness of humanity from the fetters of finitude.

Hegel was not an atheist, but the immanentizing tendency of his philosophical system gave rise to the Hegelian left, which took the atheistic turn that could only be executed in confrontation with Hegel's metaphysics. Hegel was the first philosopher to pronounce the God of traditional theism dead and to celebrate it as the coming to self-consciousness of the divine-human Spirit. Feuerbach took Hegel to mean that all theology is really just anthropology, and that philosophy's task is to reclaim for human beings the perfections ascribed to a fictive divine subject. God must die so that human beings may recognize their own excellence. An authentic humanism replaces or even excludes the idea of God as completely other than the human self.<sup>2</sup>

In the midst of such thought, is there any hope for a theistic humanism? Can the human person mature to an authentic selfhood without denying the reality of God? Is the dependence of the created an affront to the hopes of human freedom? Is the alienation of human subjectivity from its own possibilities remedied only by a denial of the otherworldly? Lonergan's philosophy seeks to provide a defense of the theistic standpoint from both

1 G.W.F Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (henceforth abbreviated as 'PhG'), trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, PhG, 1973), 126.

2 cf. Michael J. Buckley, S.J., 'Modernity and the Satanic Face of God,' in *Christian Spirituality and the Culture of Modernity: the Thought of Louis Dupré*, ed. Peter J. Casarella and George P. Schnier, S.J. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 101: "God was coming to be seen now as the alienation of the human species in favor of an imaginary subject or as the structure of the human society now writ large or as the projection out of fear and longing of oedipal necessities..."

a theoretical and existential point of view. Lonergan engages directly and indirectly in conversation with Hegel on the questions of transcendence, selfhood, and alienation. As always, Lonergan finds the key to the solution in his own foundational inquiry into human knowing, for he believes that Hegel's immanentism is, among other things, the product of an inadequate cognitional theory. Lonergan attacks the problems of self-knowledge and transcendence from the standpoint of the appropriation of one's own knowing activity. As Lonergan expands his intentionality analysis beyond cognitional and epistemological concerns into the existential, ethical and religious levels of human consciousness, we will find his response to Hegel's subordination of religious devotion to the standpoint of speculative philosophy. We will see that Lonergan's conception of religion is far different from Hegel's and that his evaluation of religious consciousness inverts Hegel's notion of 'unhappiness.' Accordingly, we will treat of the epistemological and metaphysical issues first, and then turn to their existential and religious implications. But first we will briefly outline Hegel's notion of the Unhappy Consciousness, as presented in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

#### I. HEGEL AND THE UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS

The *Gestalt* of the Unhappy Consciousness appears in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the final stage of singular self-consciousness, before it reaches Reason, which is the 'certainty of being all of reality.'<sup>3</sup> Throughout the chapter on self-consciousness, we are shown a self that is confronted with an other and that comes to full self-consciousness only by recognizing itself in that other. The Unhappy Consciousness is the climax of this movement for singular or natural self-consciousness,<sup>4</sup> before the reconciliation of consciousness and self-consciousness in Reason. As we examine Hegel's description of the Unhappy Consciousness, it seems that he had a certain image of the devout Catholic piety of the medieval period in mind when he was describing this shape. More relevant to our inquiry than historical

3 PhG, 139: "But as Reason, assured of itself...it is certain that it is itself reality, or that everything actual is none other than itself; its thinking is itself directly actuality, and thus its relationship to the latter is that of idealism."

4 Chapters 6, 7 and 8 on Objective and Absolute Spirit present the movement of self-recognition in otherness for *social* self-consciousness.



allusions, however, is the *logical or universal* form of this shape, with which Hegel himself was primarily concerned. He describes the shape as such: "The Unhappy Consciousness is the consciousness of self as a dual-natured, merely contradictory being."<sup>5</sup> Now it might seem odd that Hegel would describe devotional God-consciousness in terms of a split in *self-consciousness*, but so he does, for he is writing a *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where the divine, if it is to appear, must appear to (human) consciousness in its own immanent structure.<sup>6</sup> At this point in the development, however, self-consciousness is not yet aware of this interpenetration of finite with absolute Spirit; it experiences God as an unattainable Other, an Unchangeable essence set against self-consciousness' own changeableness.

Hegel describes three moments of the Unhappy Consciousness, which are vaguely reminiscent of earlier developments in speculative Trinitarian theology. The three stages are as such<sup>7</sup>: (1) Consciousness finds itself opposed to the Unchangeable as an alien being that passes judgment on consciousness. Here, the Unchangeable is an absolutely universal essence, with no trait of individuality or particularity; (2) the Unchangeable adopts its own individuality and self-consciousness, and thus stands against the first self-consciousness as an alien individuality. Here, in the second moment, God properly becomes *an* other, to whom the self-consciousness of the finite individual finds herself opposed; (3) finally, self-consciousness "finds its own self as this particular individual *in* the Unchangeable." This third stage is another expression for Hegel's concept of Spirit, and it does not really belong to Unhappy Consciousness at all, but comes to being only with the advent of social self-consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

In his discussion of the Unhappy Consciousness, Hegel concentrates on the second relationship. Here religious consciousness is characterized by devotion, sacrifice, and emulation of the 'shaped Unchangeable.'<sup>9</sup> The first relation is with an abstraction, that is, with the Unchangeable as a notion or

5 PhG, 126.

6 Lonergan's method is also 'phenomenological' in this way. Religious consciousness as religious experience does not initially distinguish between self and God.

7 PhG, 128.

8 cf. H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder I: The Pilgrimage of Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 403: "The third relationship, on the other hand, is present only symbolically, or as a promised 'future.' It is the second relationship that belongs to Unhappy Consciousness properly..."

9 The term is Harris' literal translation of Hegel's *gestaltete Unwandelbare*; Miller uses 'incarnate Unchangeable' in his translation. Cf. Harris, 402-410, and PhG, 130 ff.

abstract thought; alienation or the split in self-consciousness is experienced more severely in the second relation, since here the Unchangeable confronts self-consciousness in all the opacity and sensuousness of another individuality. All self-consciousness can attempt to do is to pray *to* him, become *like* him, offer itself and its life *to* him. According to Hegel, this is experienced by self-consciousness as an estrangement of its own subjectivity, for in relating to the individualized (or, more familiarly, incarnate) Unchangeable, the subject is not in full possession of itself, as it would be in a pure thinking of the *cogito*, but rather experiences radical heteronomy and dependence, in that it must be *granted* this relation by the Unchangeable itself.<sup>10</sup> Here commences Hegel's description of *Andacht* or devotion. Hegel was well aware of the devout person's conviction that prayer does not originate with her, in her thoughts or actions, but with the grace and favor of God. The alienation consists in this: that in devotion, the Unhappy Consciousness knows that it is praying to another individual, although exalted, consciousness, but it does not realize that the Unchangeable to whom it is praying is essentially its own self as Spirit. When it comes to this realization in the third relationship, we will have the birth of Spirit, which is the very event of this mutual recognition.

The inadequacy of the perspective of the Unhappy Consciousness consists in the alienation of subjectivity, and especially in the denial of the subject's ability to know fully and comprehensively that to which it is praying. *Andacht*, etymologically related to *Denken* (thinking), is a movement *toward* thought, but it lacks thought's ability to *grasp* its object: "This infinite, pure inner feeling does indeed come into possession of its object, but this does not make its appearance in conceptual form, not as something [speculatively] comprehended, and appears therefore as something alien...instead of laying hold of the essence, it only *feels* it and has fallen back into itself."<sup>11</sup> The devotion of religious consciousness is thus an affectivity that cannot approach the clarity of thought. For devotion prays to another particular individual whom it never quite reaches, while thought lays hold of the universal individual, which is the self-knowing Concept. To use Hegel's expression, the Unhappy Consciousness is burdened with a 'beyond' (*Jenseits*), and longs to lose itself therein.

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10 PhG, 130.

11 PhG, 131.

Up until now, we have been considering Hegel's discussion of the Unhappy Consciousness in relation to his presentation of it as a shape of singular self-consciousness. The overcoming of this split in self-consciousness and transition into the third stage of the Unhappy Consciousness does not occur until the birth of Spirit as the social self-consciousness in the ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) of a people.<sup>12</sup> For social spirit is formed by mutual recognition; when this recognition becomes complete, and otherness, whether of nature or of another self-consciousness, has been fully penetrated by rational self-consciousness, we have the fully developed form of Spirit. This happens only in the final stage, Absolute knowing. Before this, we have the social *Gestalten* of Culture, Faith, Enlightenment, Morality, and Religion. Thus, while it is not precisely correct to classify Hegel's conception of Religion (to be distinguished from the singular devotional consciousness described above) under the *Gestalt* of the Unhappy Consciousness (for Religion like all forms of social self-consciousness have long ago left behind a consciousness that would not be its own self-consciousness), the inadequacies of Religion in comparison with Absolute knowing have marked similarities to the contradictoriness of the Unhappy Consciousness. According to Hegel's terminology, Religion is spiritual self-consciousness, and thus is a form of knowing and not mere feeling or devotion. Religious consciousness, especially the 'manifest religion' of Christianity, is the community's self-consciousness *and* God-consciousness, since for Religion, God is fully present in the human community. However, Religion is an inadequate form of knowing the Absolute. Religion's imperfection consists in its representational, objectifying portrayal of Spirit's self-consciousness; such a portrayal falls short of the cognitive universality of Absolute Knowing. While God is known to be fully present to the human community in its social self-consciousness, this presence itself is seen as an act of divine grace rather than "the power of its [self-consciousness'] pure devotion,"<sup>13</sup> and ultimate union with the divine is still deferred into a beyond, a last judgment and afterlife.

In contrast, for Absolute knowing, Spirit becomes self-knowing Spirit in the adequate form of such knowledge, that is, the Concept. It knows itself as the objective absolute content of the representations of Religion,

12 In Chapter 6, where ancient Hellas is the paradigm of True Spirit.

13 PhG, 477.



so that when the religious community recites Christian salvation history, Spirit recognizes its own autobiography.<sup>14</sup> God is not an estranged other, his acts of salvation are nothing but the manifestation of the freedom of Spirit, which is fully immanent in the human community. In Absolute knowing there is no longer any 'beyond' for self-consciousness, but full penetration of reality by Spirit's own self-consciousness.

For Hegel, the Unhappy Consciousness plays an essential penultimate role in the self-manifestation of Spirit. For if Unhappy Consciousness can be described as the gazing of one self-consciousness into another, we have already an implicit concept of Spirit, the flip side, if you will, of Spirit as self-recognition in absolute otherness.<sup>15</sup> Spirit necessarily must go through a stage of 'unhappiness' before it can reach full reflective maturity, since it must posit an absolute otherness in which it may seek to find itself. Alienation is a necessary moment in the life of Spirit.

Long before Nietzsche, Hegel was the first philosopher and theologian to proclaim the death of God as a transcendent, unattainable idea. His reflections on the Unhappy Consciousness tell us why he found this to be cause for celebration. If traditional God-consciousness is irreducibly a split, self-estranged consciousness, then to restore human consciousness to health entails precisely the overcoming of this unattainable otherness. The final expression of the Unhappy Consciousness in the *Phenomenology* is the realization that God is dead, that, beyond human consciousness and the Spirit immanent within the rational human community, there is no transcendence; but 'inverting'<sup>16</sup> this realization is the self-empowerment of human Spirit that has reached the standpoint of Science or Absolute knowing. While not all of Hegel's followers (nor Hegel himself) drew

14 cf. PhG, 473-478.

15 cf. PhG, 14: "Pure self-recognition in absolute otherness, this Aether as such, is the ground and soil of Science or knowledge in general. The beginning of philosophy presupposes or requires that consciousness should dwell in this element... This simple being in its existential form is the soil [of Science], it is thinking which has its being in Spirit alone."

16 A favorite procedure of Hegel's speculative dialectical method. Cf. PhG, 470: "The whole is only complete when the two [contradictory] propositions are made together, and when the first is asserted and maintained, it must be countered by clinging to the other with invincible stubbornness. Since both are equally right, they are both equally wrong, and the mistake consists in taking such abstract forms as 'the same' and 'not the same', 'identity' and 'non-identity', to be something true, fixed, and actual, and in resting on them."

atheistic conclusions from his system, we can see why Hegel's thought proves troubling for conventional theism, both as a philosophical stance and as an existential option. After Hegel, is there any basis for affirming a God who is absolutely Other, independent of the human Spirit, and from whom all finite reality receives its being? If Hegel's absolute idealism of the self-knowing Concept has been rejected by most philosophers, the existential implications of the denial of transcendence have a broad and troubling legacy in contemporary intellectual culture. For with Hegel's critique of religious devotion, is there any place for prayer in a philosophically-sophisticated culture, or is Hegel right in saying that philosophy (or, more generally, critical thinking) sublates religion, has the ability to critique the latter, and that an enlightened humanism has no place for the religious? Is the religious subject irretrievably self-alienated?

## II. THE METAPHYSICAL IMMANENTISM OF THE UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS

Lonergan believes that the immanentism prevailing in Hegel's thought extends far beyond his denial of a fully transcendent God. For it infects his very theory of knowledge. It presents itself as such: knowing cannot be of an other who is irreducibly other and not penetrated by the subject. Hegel is an heir of Kant's critical idealism, which asserts that the thing in itself cannot be known. Of course, one of Hegel's great accomplishments was to break the Kantian impasse and assert that knowing is indeed of the thing itself; to do this, Hegel turns to 'absolute idealism,' the self-knowing Concept, which knows only itself; but that self is the whole of reality, substance and subject.<sup>17</sup> For Hegel, Kant's concepts, understood not as a formal framework but as dialectically developing intelligibility, apply to reality, not just to the human mind; in fact, only because mind penetrates reality can we ever come to know reality at all. For Hegel, one cannot know

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17 cf. Bernard Lonergan, S.J. *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957), Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 448: "where Kant considered the demand of reflective rationality for the unconditioned to provide no more than a regulative ideal that, when misunderstood, generates antinomies, Hegel affirmed an identification of the real with a rationality that moved necessarily from theses through antitheses to higher syntheses until the movement exhausted itself by embracing everything; where Kant had restricted philosophy to a critical task, Hegel sought a new mode, distinct from Cartesian deductivism, that would allow philosophy to take over the functions and aspirations of universal knowledge."

a reality that oneself is not; there is no knowledge of the other that is not at the same time knowledge of self; this is why the whole of his *Phenomenology* is directed towards the subsumption of all other cognitive standpoints, which still affirm an impenetrable other in some sense, into the universal standpoint of Absolute knowing, the Self that knows itself and thereby the whole of reality along with it. So for Hegel, reality is completely intelligible and conceptually comprehended by the immanent dialectic of human thought. This is why the standpoint of absolute knowing, which does not hold the distinction between subject and object to be absolute, is itself most true. The subject-object distinction, the knowing of an other, is never ultimate. The real is known by and identical with the unfolding conceptual development of mind.

It is this cognitional theory and epistemology that is at the root of Hegel's reflections on the Unhappy Consciousness. The changeable consciousness, yearning after and praying to an Unchangeable essence, is in truth only conscious of its own thought, for it could not actually know the Unchangeable (God) unless it were identical with it. But consciousness is not yet aware of this identity: this is what makes it 'unhappy.'<sup>18</sup> The Unhappy Consciousness is defective in self-knowledge; its positing of the Unchangeable essence as an other that is independent of its own consciousness expresses an alienation of self-consciousness. From the standpoint of 'Science' (*Wissen*), this alienation is overcome, as absolute knowing dispenses with the distinction between the subject that is doing the knowing and the object that is known.

In Lonergan's words, "a first step towards transcendence, then, is to reject the mistaken supposition that knowing consists in taking a look."<sup>19</sup> While this remark does not apply directly to Hegel (for Lonergan recognizes the Hegel has his own critique of the optical metaphor of knowledge), it does indicate that Lonergan's method for reaffirming the transcendence of God after Hegel's reflections on the Unhappy Consciousness will be one that focuses on an intentionality analysis and cognitional theory. Like Hegel,

18 cf. PhG, 130-131: "The Unhappy Consciousness...is the unity of pure thinking and individuality; also it *knows* itself to be this thinking individuality or pure thinking, and knows the Unchangeable itself essentially as an individuality. But what it does *not* know is that this, its object, the Unchangeable, which it knows essentially in the form of individuality, is *its own self*, is itself the individuality of consciousness."

19 *Insight*, 658.



Lonergan has a critique of Kantian phenomenalism, but Lonergan's theory is more radical in that it encompasses some of the mistaken presuppositions about the structure of knowing shared by both Kant and Hegel. For both Kant and Hegel, understanding is irreducibly conceptual; the primary source of intelligibility is thus the constructive activity of the human mind and its conceptual products, which are then somehow extrinsically related to sense data (or which, in Hegel's case, sublate the very integrity of sense data).<sup>20</sup> This is what led Kant to assert that the thing in itself, that is, the object in abstraction from its categorical structuring, is unknowable. According to Lonergan, what these two thinkers missed is the fact that intelligibility comes from insight *into* sensible experience. Insight is an act of understanding, and it is preconceptual. It gives one the intelligibility of the particular sense data; there is no 'doubling' effected by the understanding so that we could only know our own 'representations,' rather than reality itself. In order to better understand the relevance of Lonergan's cognitional theory to our discussion of Hegel, it would help to reverse the transposition into intentionality analysis of the epistemology of Aristotle and Aquinas, which Lonergan himself discusses in the *Verbum* articles. Lonergan believed that his discovery of insight was not new, but had already been discovered by Aristotle and especially by Aquinas, when the latter asserted that the intellect abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasm itself.<sup>21</sup> "Intelligence in act is identical with the intelligible in act." The implication is that knowledge is not representational, but by identity. Concepts are only a subsequent formulation, in universal and schematic terms, of the insight. What is important to note is that insight comes only in response to sensible data, and is the product of the latter's coming-to-intelligibility through the intellectual phenomena of wonder and questioning, which are themselves intellectual events that occur only through the stimulus of the sensible data of experience. Without this 'other' of sense, human knowing does not begin. But the event of understanding is the moment when the understanding becomes intentionally *identical* to that which it has sought to understand. When the mind has an insight, it has gained an understanding of the thing

20 For Hegel's critique of Kantian epistemology, cf. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1977. *Faith and knowledge* [Glauben und Wissen.]. Albany: State University of New York Press.

21 Bernard Lonergan, S.J. *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 38 ff.

itself; that is the very meaning of understanding.<sup>22</sup>

So much for Lonergan's critique of Kant which differs greatly from Hegel's own critique of his predecessor. For Hegel as well, knowledge must be by identity; but Hegel begins and ends with the self-knowing Concept. The problem with Hegel's method is that the concreteness and intrinsic intelligibility of concrete, sensible experience is not given its proper due.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the Concept can never know anything but itself, and its dialectical development is completely necessary and immanent. While Kant clung to a residual realism in postulating the existence of the thing in itself, Hegel could not recognize any epistemological exigencies external to the mind's own understanding. For Hegel, there is no 'other' to be known, for knowing is irreducibly knowledge of self, however expansively this self is envisaged.<sup>24</sup>

Now for Lonergan, insight comes only in response to questions for understanding. Without the intellectual curiosity that Lonergan and Hegel would agree is a fact of human existence, understanding would not occur. But the questions for understanding, which ask 'what is it?' (or which, in scholastic terms, inquire into the essence of a thing) and to which insights furnish a response, are not the only ones that human intelligence asks. For proceeding from such events of direct understanding, is the moment of reflective understanding and judgment, when the subject asks 'is it so?' Here the subject is not inquiring into the intelligibility of what he has yet to understand, but into the fact of the real existence of what has been understood. It is here that one, after having achieved an intentional identity with the object, with *what* one wants to know, again distinguishes herself from that object by asking whether her understanding conforms to the way things really are. So while *understanding*, preconceptual and conceptual alike, is the moment of identity in knowing, there being no duality between knower and known, *judgment* is the moment of distinction between what

22 Aquinas asserts that understanding is of the thing, not of the intelligible species, which is only that *through which* we understand. *Summa Theologiae* Ia 85.2.

23 At least once we get to the *Science of Logic*. The first shape of knowing that Hegel examines in the *Phenomenology* is 'Sense Certainty,' a kind of naïve empirical consciousness, only to dismiss it as *Meinen* and not *Wissen* at all.

24 William Desmond has a lot to say about Hegel's notion of otherness as being posited by the subject. Cf. Desmond, William, *Hegel's god: A counterfeit double?* (Ashgate studies in the history of philosophical theology. Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

one thinks, imagines, believes, seems to understand, and what is indeed the fact.

In his cognitional theory and epistemology, Hegel does not attend to the moment of judgment. For him, judgement is only syllogism of concepts, and thus does not reach out to any extra-conceptual reality. The products of human understanding reign supreme, so much so that they can take the name of 'Absolute Knowing.' It is this fail to acknowledge the self-transcending nature of judgment that puts in play the denial of transcendence evident in Hegel's analysis of the Unhappy Consciousness. It is the self-transcending activity of rational consciousness that would allow the 'unhappy changeable consciousness' to affirm the existence of the Unchangeable without thereby setting in motion the immanentizing movement of Hegel's dialectical understanding. For it is possible to know that which one is not; that is why judgment is necessary, because the achievements of human understanding do not necessarily accord with the way things in fact are. This is why reflection calls for a grasp of sufficient evidence, also called the virtually unconditioned, by which the subject transcends himself in knowing what is so. In judgment, objectivity is established. Objectivity refers to the self-transcendence of the subject, who is able to know what is other than her own understanding. This is not to say that Lonergan would consider the Unhappy Consciousness' affirmation of the divine Unchangeable to be adequate knowledge; for that would come only through a long and arduous process of inference from finite experience and its limited intelligibility. This process of inference would also allow one to affirm the existence of that which one does not fully comprehend. Only the universe of proportionate, that is sensible, being, can be fully comprehended by human intellect, which obtains insight only through experience, and there is no experience of God. However, unlike Hegel, Lonergan does not believe that there is anything intrinsically incoherent about a finite self's affirmation of the infinite that is beyond its own being.

Hegel's difficulties with this notion are expressed in his reflections on the ambiguity of the concept of limit. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel shows that to posit the limit is implicitly to have comprehended what lies beyond the limit in order to so place it, thus in the very act of positing a limit one has already transcended it.<sup>25</sup> Human understanding, if it posits a Beyond that

25 G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (London: George Allen



lies beyond the limit of its own finitude, has already implicitly transcended that Beyond; it simply needs to realize this reflectively. For Hegel, this means that the infinite's own intelligibility is derived from the finite's experience of its limitations and its self-transcendence of those limitations; in turn, the finite would not experience itself *as* finite and limited if it were not already related dialectically to the infinite. This is why Hegel conceives of the Unhappy Consciousness as a *single, split* consciousness, divided into changeable, inessential and unchangeable, essential halves; the narrative of this consciousness is told from the side of self-consciousness, which must learn that the Beyond for which it yearns really belongs to itself and is already implicitly comprehended.

Lonergan does not absolutely contradict Hegel's assertion of the unlimitedness of the human mind. Lonergan grounds his metaphysics in the pure and *unrestricted* desire to know *everything*; what we call 'being' is simply a heuristic notion for the objective of this very special desire.<sup>26</sup> In fact, he employs an argument reminiscent of Hegel's reflections on the limit to show that there in fact exists such an unrestricted desire in human consciousness. Those who deny the unrestrictedness of this desire performatively affirm it in their act of denial, since the questioning that led to the denial is itself an expression of the unrestricted desire.<sup>27</sup> In the process of questioning, to ask about limit is already to have surpassed it. This is the wonderful phenomenon that caused Aquinas to call the mind a potential infinity, *quodammodo potens omnia facere et fieri*.<sup>28</sup> However, the desire is a necessary but not sufficient condition of understanding. Here is where Lonergan and Hegel part ways. While both affirm an unrestrictedness to consciousness, Hegel conflates the desire with its fulfillment in the understanding; he thinks that understanding proceeds necessarily from the intellectual desire (by the immanent movement of the dialectic), because he has missed the

& Unwin, Ltd., 1969; New York: Humanities Press, 1999), 128: "The other determination is the unrest of the something in its limit in which it is immanent, an unrest which is the *contradiction* which impels the something out beyond itself."

26 *Insight*, 372 ff.

27 *Ibid.*, 375-376: "It will be objected by many that they have no desire to know everything about everything. But how do they know they do not already know everything about everything? It is because so many questions can be asked...Every doubt that the pure desire is unrestricted serves only to prove that it is unrestricted. If you ask whether X might not lie beyond its range, the fact that you ask proves that X lies within its range."

28 cf. *Verbum*, 96-97.

act of insight, which follows not just from the desire to know, but from the elements of experience as well, and thus is a contingent event. Lonergan can affirm the desire to know God as the ground of this unrestricted notion of being, without affirming that the subject thus implicitly knows God, for there is no experience of God that would furnish such an infinite act of understanding. God is only an heuristic notion, the ground of intelligibility of the entire universe of being; 'God' is *not* for us a concept (that is supposed to be) expressive of a realized act of understanding, as Hegel presents the Unchangeable. The yearning of the Unhappy Consciousness indicates the reality of the desire to reach the Infinite, but it neither provides the insights that would bring one into intentional (much less real) identity with it, nor the virtually unconditioned that would allow one to affirm it as a reality.

Hegel presented the Unhappy Consciousness as a deficiency in self-knowledge, for in positing the Unchangeable, finite consciousness has alienated its essential being from itself.<sup>29</sup> If self-knowledge is *not* an all-encompassing comprehension of reality (or 'essence,' in Hegelian terminology), as it must be for Hegel, how does Lonergan conceive of the finite's knowledge of itself, and how is this self-knowledge related to its awareness of the infinite? For Lonergan, self-knowledge is not the content of an inward look, nor is it merely conceptual clarity and comprehensiveness. For although Lonergan agrees with Hegel that self-knowledge is to be attained by the reflective activity of mind (which Hegel often calls *Erinnerung*), Lonergan existentializes the quest for self-knowledge by turning it into a problem of self-appropriation. Self-appropriation is not a self-objectification or speculative comprehension of oneself and world, but a personal heightening of one's knowledge of one's *own* knowing activity; it is expressed by the imperative: become what you always already are. This is accomplished only by attending to, understanding, and affirming oneself as an experiencing (conscious), intelligent (questioning and understanding), and rational (judging) being. Thus, for Lonergan, knowing oneself is not fundamentally different from knowing anything else; the same activities of experiencing, questioning, getting an insight, forming concepts, and judging are engaged; but now one is reflectively turning these activities onto themselves. Even in the process of knowing an 'other,' one can arrive at self-knowledge by knowing that knowing of the other. In a sense, human

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29 cf. note 16.

beings, who must start from sense experience, can obtain self-knowledge *only* by knowing an other (here Hegel would agree). Of course, the primary other or object in human knowing is not God, but proportionate (material) being.

### III. UNHAPPINESS, AUTHENTICITY, AND RELIGION

We have gotten some way in discussing the epistemological and metaphysical aspects of Hegel's critique of the God-consciousness that he calls 'unhappy,' and provided a Lonerganian response. However, if the importance of Hegel's critique of God-consciousness were primarily a matter of cognitional theory and Hegel's peculiar brand of idealism, perhaps reflections on the Unhappy Consciousness would be confined to Hegel scholarship. However, Hegel's reflections on alienated consciousness have practical and existential implications that thinkers as diverse as Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard and Sartre, were able to draw upon. Hegel himself emphasized the disempowerment of human freedom that results from such a consciousness. The Unhappy Consciousness is not purely a case of cognitive inadequacy. It is *experienced* as a frustration of *freedom*: the Unhappy Consciousness' devotion to the transcendent Beyond interferes with its naïve, straightforward pursuit of finite enjoyment; it finds itself living a contradictory existence of offering up everything it is and does to the Unchangeable in prayer and thanksgiving, all the while with the awareness that it is consciousness itself that is doing the struggling to etch out a life of its own.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the *Phenomenology* is just as much about the maturation of human freedom, Spirit, as it is about the coming on the scene of Science. Alienation is experienced more as a deprivation of freedom than as a deficiency in knowledge.

Nevertheless, we had to consider carefully the cognitional, epistemological, and metaphysical aspects of the question, because Lonergan's response requires it.<sup>31</sup> Before we can concentrate on Lonergan's

30 PhG, 134: "For though consciousness renounces the *show* of satisfying its feeling of self [in thanksgiving and self-surrender], it obtains the actual satisfaction of it; for it has been desire, work, and enjoyment; as consciousness it has willed, acted and enjoyed."

31 cf. 'The Subject' in *The Lonergan Reader*, ed. Mark D. Morelli and Elizabeth A. Morelli (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 435: "It is then, no accident that a theater of the absurd, a literature of the absurd, and philosophies of the absurd flourish in a culture in which there are theologians to proclaim that God is dead. But that absurdity



answer to this practical critique of the Unhappy Consciousness, we must consider Lonergan's own understanding of alienation, and especially how religion relates to it. For Lonergan, the experience of alienation is caused by an existential rather than purely cognitive event. For Hegel, the alienation and deficiency of freedom experienced by the Unhappy Consciousness is the result of an inadequate mode of knowing, an Idealism<sup>32</sup> that is not fully developed, or the Concept that has yet to come to reflective self-awareness. A problem of self-knowledge, it is also a necessary step on the way to Reason's achievement of the self-certainty that self-consciousness had been seeking. Lonergan has another sense of self-estrangement, which pays heed to the existentialist reflections of contemporary philosophy; in fact, he borrows a favorite expression from the existentialists: *authenticity*.<sup>33</sup> Here it is a question not so much of knowing oneself as choosing oneself and what one wants to make of oneself. Authenticity refers to a way of being, where 'way of being' includes knowing, choosing, and loving; it describes the state of having fulfilled the transcendental imperatives of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and especially responsibility. These imperatives are *transcendental* in that they carry one beyond all finite objectives and call for unrelenting self-transcendence, but at the same time

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and that death have their roots in a new neglect of the subject, a new truncation, a new immanentism. In the name of phenomenology, of existential self-understanding, of human encounter, of salvation history, there are those that resentfully and disdainfully brush aside the old questions of cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics."

32 In the *Phenomenology*, the Unhappy Consciousness can be thought of as the moment of alienation necessary for the advent of Reason's thoroughgoing Idealism, just as the Death of God constitutes the necessary birth pangs before the apotheosis of Spirit. For the transition from the Unhappy Consciousness to Reason, cf. PhG 137-140; for the 'birth pangs of Spirit', PhG 456; 476.

33 Lonergan uses the word 'alienation' more often to describe the concrete subject's relation to a too-abstract expression of an ideal that is only implicit in the subject herself. Since it has to do with a subject's relation to what is external to her own self-made existence (such as a cultural ideal or religious or social institution), such alienation can be overcome by progression to a higher viewpoint. Here Lonergan acknowledges his debt to Hegel. cf. Lonergan, *Understanding and Being* (1980), The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 12 ff. However, he parts from Hegel, in his sharp distinction of such uses of 'alienation' and his own concept of 'authenticity,' which results not from the inadequacy of an ideal (as Hegel's unhappy consciousness does and Lonergan's social sense of alienation does), but from the failure of the subject to live up to an ideal that is indeed adequate. Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 104. Cf. also Elizabeth Morelli, 'Post-Hegelian Elements in Lonergan's Philosophy of Religion' in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (Fall 1994), 228, for the contrast between dialectical and genetic methods in Lonergan's thought.

are themselves *immanent and operative* in consciousness itself.<sup>34</sup> For Hegel, the Unhappy Consciousness becomes incorporated into the immanent Idealism of Reason; the contradictions inherent in the former viewpoint force consciousness to go beyond it. In contrast, for Lonergan, the transition from unauthenticity to authenticity is effected not by a necessary conceptual development nor even a contingent genetic progress (the natural outgrowth of a more adequate viewpoint from a less adequate one as a result of the accumulation of insights)<sup>35</sup>, but by *conversion*, which is effected not by an increase in knowledge but by a radical personal decision to turn from one way of living to another.<sup>36</sup> "Man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence," writes Lonergan.<sup>37</sup> Not only is it the self that is being transcended, but it is the self, the existential subject, that is doing the transcending. Self-transcendence is set in motion by the asking and answering of questions. We have spoken at length on the questions for intelligence and for reflection. But there remain questions for deliberation, which ask, not, 'what is it?' or 'is it so?', but 'is it worthwhile?', 'is it valuable?', 'is it worth choosing, doing, loving?', and 'should I choose, do, love this?' This is the realm of existential reflection and self-determination, where self-transcendence is no longer merely cognitive, but moral. It is the realm of freedom.

But in human experience, this awakening of freedom is not an easy achievement; it is beset with problems. As Lonergan says,

Of itself, self-transcendence involves tension between the self as transcending and the self as transcended. So human authenticity is never some pure and serene and secure possession. It is ever a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and every successful withdrawal only brings to light the need for further withdrawals.<sup>38</sup>

Authenticity's precariousness, its vulnerability to the accumulation of oversights, poor judgments, and irresponsible choices, prompt Lonergan to surmise that man can only achieve effective self-transcendence with the aid

34 On the transcendental notions, cf. *Method in Theology*, 6-13.

35 One might say that in the *Phenomenology*, the task of the phenomenological observer is not to critique but simply to observe the genetic transformation of natural consciousness into its various successive 'shapes.'

36 I am indebted to Elizabeth Morelli's article, 'Post-Hegelian Elements', for my discussion of the notion of authenticity and the importance of conversion in Lonergan's thought.

37 *Method in Theology*, 103.

38 *Ibid.*, 110.

of religion.

Why religion? Now if we were to define religion, as does Hegel, as Spirit's attainment of self-consciousness, we would tend to believe that authentic religious consciousness could come only as a *result* of cognitive and moral maturity,<sup>39</sup> and thus could not provide the *ground* for self-transcendence. Lonergan himself acknowledges that the question of God does not come first for finite intelligence, but is rather asked as one reflects on one's own intelligence: "In the measure that we advert to our own questioning and proceed to question it, there arises the question of God."<sup>40</sup> However, because of interference from other desires, the attentiveness, inquisitiveness, and intelligence that are the ground of such questioning are often not operating in an unrestricted manner. Therefore the question of God, and many other questions, fail to arise, or are brushed off arbitrarily. The pure desire, the giving free reign to one's questioning spirit, fails to get expressed. This is what Lonergan means by unauthenticity: at root it is a disorder of desire. Religion, as Lonergan understands it, is the cure only because he defines it as a 'being in love':

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

That fulfillment is not the product of our knowledge and choice. On the contrary, it dismantles and abolishes the horizons 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.<sup>41</sup>

Religion engenders a change of heart or affective conversion that redirects the thrust of one's conscious intentionality, giving rise to new questions, insights, and possibilities for living. Just as the notion of God is the heuristic notion for the objective of the pure, disinterested, unrestricted

39 'Religion' is the penultimate chapter of the *Phenomenology, after Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, Reason, and Spirit* (the last containing Ethical Life and Morality).

40 *Method in Theology*, 103.

41 *Ibid*, 106.



desire to know and love,<sup>42</sup> being in love with God gives new vigor to this desire. Being in love pulls us out of unauthenticity by opening our eyes and inflaming our hearts.

Lonergan's understanding of religion as being in love can explain his attitude towards both the Unhappy Consciousness and the sublation of Religion by Philosophy in Hegel's thought. In the description of Hegel's doctrine of the Unhappy Consciousness, we mentioned Hegel's preference of conceptual grasp of the Unchangeable to be effected in Absolute knowing to the feeling (*Gefühl*) and devotion (*Andacht*) of the Unhappy Consciousness; for Hegel, the infinite yearning of the Unhappy Consciousness for God only approaches thought, and is destined to be sublated by the conceptual clarity of Science. Now, for Lonergan, God cannot be grasped by finite intelligence, which has an unrestricted desire to know but a restricted ability to fulfill this desire. The gap created by the fact of the pure desire and its inability to be fulfilled naturally launches consciousness into the realm of mystery, where love precedes and supercedes knowledge.<sup>43</sup> While both Hegel and Lonergan are in agreement about the reality of this orientation towards infinity, Hegel thinks that it is merely a projection into the Beyond of the infinity of consciousness itself and must be turned around into the reflective self-knowing of the Concept. For Hegel, the yearning is for an infinity that is closed, immanent and circular. For Lonergan, the self-transcendence of the pure desire is asymptotic; its basic (but not complete) fulfillment in the dynamic state of being in love with a mysterious being is experienced not

42 On the relation of the notion of God to the pure desire, cf. Joseph Flanagan, S.J. *Quest for Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Lonergan's Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 234: "God, then, can be defined heuristically and implicitly as the completely valuable objective of all your questioning and desirings that you do not yet know and have not yet loved." Actually, we have identified the objective of the pure desire to know with the notion of being. But as Lonergan identifies God with the ground of the coincidence of intelligibility and being, we with Flanagan can use this shorthand. In addition, Flanagan extends the objective of the pure desire to include not only cognition, but affectivity as well, that is, the fourth dimension of human consciousness, after experiencing, understanding and judgment: that of deciding. This operation is grounded in the discernment of value. Therefore, God is both the completely intelligible and valuable objective of the pure desire.

43 cf. *Method in Theology*, 122-123: "But the major exception to the Latin tag [*nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*] is God's gift of his love flooding our hearts. Then we are in the dynamic state of being in love. But who it is we love, is neither given nor as yet understood...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..."

as a logical consequence of the desire, but as a transformative gift.

Because for Hegel the logical and natural consequence of the desire is its consummation in Science, Religion must do away with the infinite yearning of the Unhappy Consciousness. For Hegel, Religion proper is not a mysterious state of affective consciousness, but the manifestation of social self-consciousness. The Unhappy Consciousness is reconciled in the self-consciousness of the community, where the community knows itself to possess all truth and to be Absolute Spirit. Although Hegel uses Christian imagery in his portrayal of the Manifest Religion, he cannot rest content with monotheism's absolute distinction between Creator and creature. The devotion of the religious community is a form of *self*-knowledge, a self-conscious manifestation of God's presence, and an awareness of the identity of the divine and the human. Hegel views the absolute distinction between finite and infinite to be a mark of the inadequate perspective of the Unhappy Consciousness; it is the sublation of this metaphysical heterogeneity that Hegel interprets as the reconciliation effected by Christianity. However, even the community of the Manifest Religion has not dispensed with every trace of alienation, since it thinks of its own deification in terms of the Beyond (it imagines the act of redemption to have happened long ago, and its final salvation to be postponed in the afterlife). It doesn't yet understand that its final reconciliation is accomplished here and now, in the Scientific community of Absolute knowing, where the self-knowing of this rational community is God's own knowing of Godself. For Hegel, his misunderstanding of itself on the part of religious consciousness is an inevitable consequence of Religion's representative portrayal of absolute knowledge. The content of Religion and speculative Science are identical, but one narrates this content in the language of *Vorstellen*, and the other thinks this content in the speculative Concept. The standpoint of philosophy, stripped of the external trappings of *Vorstellen*, is superior to that of religion. Religion then naturally must be sublated by Absolute knowing.

Lonergan is able to reverse Hegel's subordination of religion to philosophy because of his interpretation of religion in existential, affective terms rather than purely speculative terms. Religion does not exclude knowledge, but knowing is always the knowing of some subject, and this subject can be authentic or inauthentic. Being in love transforms the subject to authentic living, and gives new direction to her activity as a knower and



chooser; this dynamic affective state sublates knowing by providing new meaning and symbols<sup>44</sup>, thereby replenishing the imagination and giving birth to new insights. Hegel cannot understand how an affective state could further understanding, for the Concept is self-contained; feeling must simply be left behind as irreducibly 'subjective.'<sup>45</sup> Lonergan in contrast perceives the genesis of understanding out of transformed experience, including new emotions generated by symbols.

We have yet to answer the objection that Hegel raised at the beginning of this section – how do we reconcile consciousness of God as a Beyond with the freedom of the human spirit, including and especially the responsible freedom of ethical and moral living? First of all, 'God' is defined the objective of the unrestricted desire; it is that which would satisfy all my longings, so Lonergan makes this infinite longing and beholdenness to the mystery of being in love the ground of all my choosing and loving, for if you don't choose some ultimate, you don't choose anything at all. This is because all choosing is grounded in value; we choose by discerning values. But what makes the world in which human beings live and act ultimately valuable and not just absurd? For Lonergan, the only way the world can be considered objectively valuable in a specifically human, ethical sense is if it was created out the conscious, intelligent, and free goodness of a Creator:

If in that sense the world is not good, then goodness in that sense is to be found only in man. If still man would be good, he is alien to the rest of the universe. If on the other hand he renounces authentic living and drifts into the now seductive and now harsh rhythms of his psyche and of nature, then man is alienated from himself.<sup>46</sup>

In a sense, the notion of God, as the transcendental source of value, is implicit in all my desiring and choosing. For Lonergan, the importance of freedom is that it allows us to discern value and make ourselves in its image. Even the ideal of autonomy, the legacy of Kant that Hegel inherited, is supported by the notion of value. Human consciousness' opening onto the Infinite is not experienced as a self-alienation, but as the fulfillment of its selfhood.

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44 Lonergan defines symbols by their ability to produce an affective response: "A symbol is an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling," cf. *Method in Theology*, 64.

45 Cf. *Faith and Knowledge*.

46 'The Subject', 435.



## CONCLUSION

For Lonergan, knowing and self-knowing is not a matter of complete and total recognition of oneself in the other, as it is for Hegel. It is a matter of continual and unrelenting self-transcendence.<sup>47</sup> "The key to doctrines of immanence is an inadequate notion of objectivity,"<sup>48</sup> insists Lonergan. Because Hegel did not attend to the self-transcendence of the subject in its knowing activity, he thought of the Beyond of infinity as an unknowable projection of the imagination. Lonergan realized that the essence of the human self consists in its reaching out beyond all boundaries. In a sense, there is no unknowable Beyond for intellect, which has an unrestricted desire and an unlimited capacity to question. It may not be able to answer everything about which it can ask, but it remains that the adequate object of the intellect is being, which is everything that can be asked about, and *that* is everything. Likewise, for human beings, freedom is not a matter of self-recognition but of self-transcendence, for it is at the service of value, that which is not dependent on the subject's own choice, but grounds it. The 'Unhappy Consciousness' is not for Lonergan a matter of failure of total self-recognition, but of effective self-transcendence.

Neither does Lonergan believe that religious consciousness is destined to be surpassed by philosophy. The subject of religion, when she is intellectually converted, does not think representatively (Lonergan's word is 'picture thinking'); her intellect has been set free from the restraints of the imagination. However, because human intellect is incarnate, intellectual conversion (consciousness that has achieved theoretical differentiation), does not dispense with the need for images and with the symbolic dimension of consciousness, where meanings are mediated to us more primordially. Thus the symbols of religion can never be replaced by speculative logic; logic only provides symbols with a control of meaning, so that symbols are not destroyed by sublation, but elevated and vivified.

Above all, religion cannot be reduced to a set of symbols (or 'representations'), any more than it can be summated in a body of speculative propositions. For religion is an existential phenomenon, involving the

47 Ibid, 422: "Intentionally it [the truth] does go completely beyond the subject, yet it does so only because ontologically the subject is capable of an intentional self-transcendence, of going beyond what he feels, what he imagines, what he thinks, what seems to him, to something utterly different, to what is so."

48 Ibid, 426.

subject and her knowing, choosing, and loving. While indeed capable of social expression, it remains a personal engagement of the subject. It has not the luxury of theory's disinterest, but demands decision and action. Thus Lonergan introduces the distinction of authentic/inauthentic into religious experience. Self-transcendence is central to Lonergan's diagnosis of the 'health' of any particular singular or social consciousness, be it religious or not. And this health can only be determined by the subject herself, whether she is being attentive to the transcendental precepts: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible. Human being, because it is free and capable of ethical existence, can be authentic or inauthentic; and because it is religious and capable of falling in love and being transported outside of itself, its freedom can become meaningful and effective. Lonergan sees religion as the only answer to man's existential dilemmas, and being in love with God, paradoxically, as the only remedy for the Unhappy Consciousness.





## POLITICS AND METAPHYSICS: A HORTATORY EXERCISE<sup>1</sup>

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CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PRACTICE in liberal democracies scorns any reference to metaphysics in political discourse. Usually “metaphysical” claims, particularly if they are associated with religious views, are labeled under the pejorative heading of “ideology.”

### 1. A POST-METAPHYSICAL WORLD

The historical reasons for this disdain of the metaphysical in politics are not hard to discern. The conjunction of the development of modern science and the break from the *ancien régime* fostered an ambiance of skepticism with regard to putative metaphysical claims. We are reminded of Voltaire’s approbation of the openness of scientific method, as witnessed in the England of Newton, in contrast to the rigid dogmas of “metaphysical sects.”<sup>2</sup> We can recall that, for Hume, the historian of the English Civil War, the metaphysical sects were the religious sectaries, boiling over in bibliolatriy, which threatened the destruction of the polity—and only reinforced his “mitigated skepticism.”<sup>3</sup> This is representative of a loose but pervasive historical association in the last few centuries of metaphysics and religious fanaticism, not withstanding the fact that the bibliolaters were hardly orthodox Christians but millenialists (those whom Voegelin called neo-gnostics). The historical association also included the *ancien régime*, which seemed bolstered by

1 This was first presented as a paper at the West Coast Methods Institute and Fallon Memorial Lonergan Symposium at Loyola Marymount University, April 16, 2009.

2 Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters*, trans. Ernest Dilworth, The Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961).

3 Davis Hume, *The History of England*, ed. Rodney Kilcup, Classics of British Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

the triad of antiquated theology, antiquated metaphysics, and antiquated cosmology. The divine right of kings and the authoritative role of the Church seemed consonant with a theological view of the world and of the polity; reverence for tradition and a fixed order of society seemed consonant with a metaphysics of essences; and the hierarchical society seemed consonant with the hierarchical cosmos. Charles Taylor's erudite work on secularization argues persuasively that the disintegration of the old idea of the hierarchical cosmos had a shattering effect on the cultural horizon of the Western world, since the successor cosmologies of modernity—Cartesian, Newtonian, Darwinian—insofar as they were taken as paradigmatic for intellectual culture, only created tensions, conundrums, and contradictions, leading inexorably to the cultural triumph of a confused blend of pluralism and relativism.<sup>4</sup> Reflective of this tendency was Mill's influential work, *On Liberty*, which presupposed the impossibility of deciding ultimate claims in the marketplace of political ideas.<sup>5</sup> If the skeptical relation to metaphysical claims was not strong enough, the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century only reinforced the connection. Of course, to follow Voegelin's analysis of secularization, these movements were secular manifestations of millennialism and neo-gnostic sentiments with their claims of esoteric "knowledge" of history. But the alleged "knowledge" was surely not of the traditional metaphysical type: the Marxists appealed to praxis and attacked metaphysics as the false consciousness of feudal society; while the Fascists and National Socialists appealed to irrational intuition. Still, these movements were ideological, in the sense argued by Hannah Arendt, insofar as they were totally committed to the logos of an idea and, in so doing, were vigorously and ruthlessly forcing ultimate claims onto the political arena.<sup>6</sup> It is easy to see how defenders of the freedom of liberal democracy could depict the struggle against totalitarians as the struggle against the tyranny of ideas and how this struggle could be viewed as a continuation of the old battle against metaphysics. Karl Popper thus identified the enemies of the open society as not only the totalitarian movements but also as Plato—

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4 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

5 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Currin V. Shields, The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: Macmillan, 1956). The closest approximation to truth will come from the "reconciling and combining of opposites," which presupposes liberty (58).

6 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1958), 469.

and perforce all metaphysicians.<sup>7</sup> So in the horizon of political culture the metaphysical merged into the ideological.

In the field of political philosophy, too, the metaphysical is largely ruled out of court. To be sure, the trends we discussed above have their long-term influence on political theory. But the main philosophical influence is not hard to find. Kant's critique of metaphysics is decisive. All subsequent attempts at political philosophy operate in the wake of the Kantian critique and cannot escape its power. The fact that in the philosophical generation after Kant the German Idealists constructed grandiose systems of metaphysics, which included a metaphysical notion of the state, only bears witness to this power of Kant, since the Idealists were taking up Kant's challenge, attempting to overcome his gap between subject and object as they accounted for the genesis of his categories of understanding. And by the end of the nineteenth century one of the main trends in intellectual culture was a "revolt against idealism."<sup>8</sup> While the idealist's metaphysical notion of the state lent some support for welfare state liberalism in late nineteenth century England (through the interpretations of Thomas Hill Green) and early twentieth-century progressivism (along with pragmatism) in the United States, this explicit support has definitely receded into the historical background.<sup>9</sup> After all, it would be "ideological." More characteristic of the post-Kantian trend were Kant's own writings on history and politics, following his *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Critique of Judgment* (where metaphysics tried making an entry through the back door);<sup>10</sup> or the utilitarian attempt to determine the public good by a scientific calculus of pleasure as quantifiable good; or Herbert Spencer's validation of liberal free market and democracy in terms of the evolutionary norm of survival of the fittest;<sup>11</sup> or the existential

7 Carl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

8 H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1958), chap. 8, where the emphasis is on Max Weber. For the general philosophical trend, see Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 8, *Bentham to Russell* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1966), pt. 5.

9 See George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. Thomas Landon Thorson (Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press, 1973), "The Idealist Revision of Liberalism," 655-663.

10 Immanuel Kant, *On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck, The Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963).

11 J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1966, chap. 6. Spencer was one of the most widely read thinkers of his time.



phenomenologist's appeal, shorn of any metaphysics, to the openness of the existential subject against the otherness of technique and domination; or the Post-Modern attack simply on technique and domination with no existential subject; or the legal positivists, such as Austin or Hans Kelsen, who found the only ultimate norms in the polity as the basic rules of the political structure itself (which, of course, can differ from age to age and polity to polity);<sup>12</sup> or the prescient neo-Kantianism of Hans Vaihinger, who would have us admit that no metaphysical claims are valid but that the polity must, nonetheless, be grounded in metaphysical claims, leading inevitably to the imperative of acting "as if" our grounding political fictions are true, thus consciously creating political myths;<sup>13</sup> or, perhaps as the *reductio ad absurdum* of this whole trend, the nihilistic decisionism of Carl Schmitt, where the polity, at a decisive moment when its very existence is at stake, decides for basic norms as a sheer exercise of its will to be.<sup>14</sup> This survey is by no means exhaustive, but it suggests that political theory in the post-metaphysical age is hardly without problems. Certainly the defense of liberal democracy seems tepid.

Lonergan, as we know, was well aware of this situation (which is substantially the same today as it was in his time). And Lonergan would agree with most of the criticisms of traditional metaphysics. He deplors essentialist metaphysics, having spent considerable personal energy in coming to grips with it and considerable philosophical analysis of the source and historical sweep of its appeal and of its fatal defect.<sup>15</sup> He would divorce

12 On Austin, see Clarence Morris, ed., *The Great Legal Philosophers: Selected Readings in Jurisprudence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 335-363; on Kelsen, see Eric Voegelin, *Selected Book Reviews*, vol. 11 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Jodi Cockerill and Barry Cooper (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 131-134 [review of Hans Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State*]; *The Nature of Law and Related Legal Writings*, vol. 27 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Robert Anthony Pascal, James Lee Babin, and John William Corrington (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 28, 31.

13 Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, 110-112.

14 Karl Lowith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, trans. Gary Steiner. *European Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 137-159.

15 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Vol. 2 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 20, 38-40, 243-248; *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, 5th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 388-398; 427-433, 437-441; *Collection*, vol. 4 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. F. E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), chap. 13; *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 95-96.

any insights of traditional thinkers from their formulation within the context of what he characterizes as "antiquated science."<sup>16</sup> In light of the discoveries by modern thinkers of subject and self - along a path from Descartes, to Kant, to Hegel, to Kierkegaard and other existentialists - he would find the faculty psychology of traditional metaphysics utterly inadequate.<sup>17</sup> He would also join modern thinkers to emphasize the historicity of human being, opposed to any static view of the polity.<sup>18</sup> And, like Descartes, he would start out with a method not a metaphysics.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. POST-METAPHYSICAL POLITICAL THINKERS:

VOEGELIN, TAYLOR, AND HABERMAS

But the starting point of method (and of the method of metaphysics) is "people as they are" in the activity of questioning.<sup>20</sup> This brings us back to Kant's injunction that whatever the prospects of metaphysics, humans will persist, by something rooted in their very nature, in asking metaphysical questions. We must, however, be aware of how distinct in this regard is Lonergan's own approach. And this very distinctness will give rise to a contemporary exigency to develop metaphysics as an aid to political theory. We can get some glimpse of this exigency by considering three thinkers - one, Eric Voegelin, a contemporary of Lonergan, the other two, Charles Taylor and Jurgen Habermas, still our contemporaries today - who, on the one hand, are resolute and erudite in focusing on the process of questioning and, on the other hand, have problems with metaphysics. I argue their focus on questioning leads them towards metaphysics in spite of themselves.

Voegelin would ground political theory in the range of experiences associated with the process of questioning, with its directional tendency

16 *Insight*, 448.

17 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, vol. 18 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 214-215, 313-316; *Method*, pp. 96, 316, 343; *A Second Collection*, ed. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 69-86; *Verbum*, 3-6.

18 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964*, vol. 6 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), chap. 3; *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, New York: Paulist Press, 1985), chap. 11; *Method*, 81, 325.

19 *Insight*, chap. 14, esp. 443-436.

20 *Ibid.*, 422.



toward divine transcendence and its participation in divine presence. His historical analyses from Plato to Bergson endorse the link between the open soul and the open society.<sup>21</sup> No category of natural science or, in general, of subject-object bifurcation (what he calls "consciousness as intentionality") can capture the reality of this process of questioning (what he calls "consciousness as luminosity").<sup>22</sup> This includes propositional metaphysics, which, Voegelin claims, begins in a formal manner with Aquinas (although he admits that Aquinas has "empirical control" of the material) and which, he claims, hypostatizes the symbols engendered by the experiences of transcendence by transforming them into syllogisms or "proofs" that more properly regard "being-things" (the objects of consciousness as intentionality).<sup>23</sup> He also sees particular problems with employing metaphysical terms to the dynamics of the polity, as when Aristotle uses his metaphysical term "form" in his analysis of the state.<sup>24</sup> While Voegelin here may seem to be under the sway of the Kantian critique of metaphysics, Voegelin nevertheless makes metaphysical statements himself. He seems to favor a kind of process metaphysics, perhaps one with affinity to Shelling's *Potenzlehre*, where cosmic and human and historical development is encompassed by divine presence.<sup>25</sup> He argues that Aristotle is correct in his

21 On the equivalence of the Hellenic "reason" (*nous*) and Bergson's "open soul" (*l'âme ouverte*), see Eric Voegelin, *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 72-73, 119-120, 273-274.

22 For the distinction of consciousness as intentionality and consciousness as luminosity, see Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 5, *In Search of Order*, vol. 18 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 28-33. For the equivalence in Lonergan of "consciousness as participation" and a different meaning of "intentionality," see Thomas J. McPartland, *Lonergan and the Philosophy of Historical Existence* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), chap. 11.

23 Voegelin, *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, pp. 382-383; *Order and History*, vol. 5, 83. Aquinas, Voegelin argues, had empirical control because he operated within, and gave articulation to, consciousness as participation; furthermore, he could assume that the audience he was addressing in his debates would share this experiential framework; but he failed to differentiate consciousness as participation consistently from consciousness as intentionality. Such a failure of differentiation is more marked and serious in the modern world, where, in much of the "climate of opinion," representation of consciousness as participation has been lost. *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, chap. 2.

24 Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 3, *Plato and Aristotle*, vol. 16 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Dante Germino (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 387-389.

25 Eric Voegelin, *History of Political Ideas*, vol. 7, *The New Order and Last Orientation*, vol. 25 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Jurgen Gebhardt and Thomas A. Hol-



"synthetic" view of human reality as a unity of manifolds, ranging, along an ascending scale, from the apeironic depths to the inorganic, the organic, the animal, and the noetic levels.<sup>26</sup> He does not reduce this synthetic reality to the play of natural, social, or historical forces because consciousness as luminosity is an operator, making the self an actor in the drama of history and leading to differentiations of consciousness, which are "leaps in being" (without leaping outside of history).<sup>27</sup> Nor does he reduce the reality of social process and historical movement simply to the play of individuals. It is clear the Voegelin is against naturalistic reductionism, metaphysical deductionism, essentialism, and faculty psychology. It is equally clear he is talking about human reality and divine reality.

Charles Taylor seems to have arrived at a position similar to that of Voegelin. After extraordinary detailed and insightful analyses of the development of modern concepts of the self and of the modern process of secularization, he is fully aware of the limitations and contradictions in modern thought.<sup>28</sup> But he agrees with contemporary trends to the extent that he sees the appeal to metaphysics as impossible. We cannot reverse the change in worldview that came with modern cosmology and its sundering of a sense of participating in a hierarchical cosmos, with the attendant Cartesian "disengaged subject" confronting the world as an object through representations of the mind, and with the more contemporary post-Cartesian "engaged subject" dwelling in the world prior to any disengagement, which can never be complete and articulate with respect to its historically embedded horizon.<sup>29</sup> Instead of a metaphysical analysis he would conduct a hermeneutical explication of the acts that underpin our search, as "engaged subjects," for goods, in particular the higher goods in life.<sup>30</sup> This approach

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Iweck (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 193-242, esp. 208-209; Jerry Day, *Voegelin, Shelling, and the Philosophy of Historical Existence* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

26 Voegelin, *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, 267-268, 289-290.

27 Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 1, *Israel and Revelation*, vol. 14 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Maurice P. Hogan (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 80-81, 90, 111, 164-165, 172; *Order and History*, vol. 2, *The World of the Polis*, vol. 15 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Athanasios Moulakis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 67-90.

28 For his massive exploration of these complexities, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); *A Secular Age*.

29 Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pt. 1.

30 Ibid.

seems to be equivalent to Voegelin's reference to language symbols that serve as indices of the movement of questioning and, as Brian Braman has argued forcefully in his book *Meaning and Authenticity*, to Lonergan's notion of the norms of self-transcending inquiry.<sup>31</sup> Yet Taylor is hesitant to pursue the further cognitional, epistemological, and metaphysical questions that flow from, and could enrich, his hermeneutical explication. To enter the terrain leading to the metaphysical, would be, in this view, to encounter the gap between subject and object, for which there is no bridge.<sup>32</sup> The journey to the metaphysical, then, is thwarted at the beginning. Habermas seems to have gone farther on the journey, but eventually he faces the same obstacle.

Habermas, in a fashion similar to Lonergan, sees in human intentionality and questions a basic norm, which he identifies with the "emancipatory interest."<sup>33</sup> This "interest" is concretely operative in human cooperation when inquirers submit to the norms of the "ideal communication situation." This norm allows human science to go beyond positivism and adopt a critical stance, a position in complete agreement with Lonergan. Habermas chides existentialists and Post-Modern thinkers for not taking truth seriously and thereby engaging in a performative contradiction.<sup>34</sup> For Habermas, following Charles Peirce, who is a kind of critical realist, the criterion of truth is heuristically located in the activity of the community of inquirers.<sup>35</sup> This interest in truth has led Habermas to engage in dialogue with analytical philosophers, where he is on the threshold of metaphysics.

31 Brian J. Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor on the Drama of Authentic Existence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

32 For analysis of sources and both comparison and contrast with Lonergan, see Nicholas Plants, "Lonergan and Taylor: A Critical Integration," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 19 no. 1(2001), 143-172. Taylor, according to Plants, accepts the representation model (a subset of the confrontation theory of truth) as the standard for a realist epistemology, which, not surprisingly, makes knowledge of self problematic (hermeneutics, for example, does not follow the representational model).

33 Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chap. 9.

34 Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990), chaps. 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 (the self-critique of reason in Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, and Foucault) and 279-281 (the failure to overcome the "self-referential problem" by Foucault).

35 Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, chaps. 5-6. Habermas integrates this theory of communicative action with the sociologies of Meade, Weber, and Parsons in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols., trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984-87).

Indeed, he concludes—by way of “realist intuitions”—that there is a reality transcending us, that we know something of this reality by encountering it as cognitive agents, and that our linguistic assertions refer to language-independent objects. But he stops there. We must reject “representational realism” and the correspondence theory of truth, substituting for it a version of the coherence theory of truth rooted in a Kantian pragmatism with the epistemic priority of the “linguistically articulated horizon of the lifeworld.”<sup>36</sup> At this point, so it is evident, the problem of bridging the gap between subject and object has reared its ugly head again. Habermas, then, continues to claim explicitly and programmatically that we live in a post-metaphysical world, where “right” can no longer be based on some contested metaphysics of human nature. He carries out his program, for example, in making arguments, perhaps surprisingly, against genetic engineering and embryonic stem cell research. His reasoning is not based, he emphatically states, on the metaphysical status of the embryo (that, he alleges, would look like an ideological claim). It is based on an elaborate inference from the presuppositions of authentic liberal democracy. This authenticity, we have seen, resides in the ideal communication situation, and the presuppositions, therefore, are those that must promote and nourish the ideal communication situation, giving rise to the notion of “human dignity” (in contrast to the metaphysical notion of “human nature”). He concludes that the genetic alteration or death of the embryo would deprive it of the freedom associated with the ideal communication situation.<sup>37</sup> But is Habermas not assuming that, in reality, there is continuity between the embryo and its later (expected) status as a rational member of the (possible) ideal communication situation? Does he not assume that the embryo is, in reality, a human person? The title of the work in which he discusses these issues, *The Future of Human Nature*, seems an odd one in a post-metaphysical world, even as he tries, perhaps too hard, to substitute “human dignity” for “human nature.” To be sure, if by metaphysics one means essentialist ontology (what Habermas labels “conceptualist realism”) coupled with a static hierarchical cosmos and a faculty psychology, then Lonergan would

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36 Jhrgen Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 10, 30.

37 Jhrgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2003, pp. 25-26, 32-43; *Truth and Validity*, chap. 6..



agree that one should be post-metaphysical.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. PERSISTENT METAPHYSICAL ISSUES IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

But it is impossible to ignore the metaphysical in making claims about the polity (as it is in any other field of being). It should be obvious where metaphysical claims reside, but perhaps it will help to give a brief outline of the main areas where there are metaphysical issues in political theory. What Lonergan, then, offers is a way to handle these issues critically and methodically. He offers, in short, a post-metaphysical metaphysics. In this he stands out as unique.

The first metaphysical issue concerns the self. If we talk of citizens and of persons as subjects of human rights, do we not presuppose the existence of the self? What is the self? How is the self the subject of human rights? Or is it just the phenomenal self? Is there a noumenal self? Does the self, in fact, exist? Lonergan would analyze the self metaphysically in terms of his notions of central potency, form, and act—where there is insight into a unity-identity-whole grasped in data as individual, and where the individual so grasped is acting in particular spaces and times.<sup>39</sup> This unity-identity-whole is a person because it has, according to Lonergan, conjugate potencies, form, and acts and the conjugate form is that of certain kind of thing, which is a unity of organic, psychic, and intellectual levels of integration.<sup>40</sup> The metaphysics will specify that the levels are higher integrations and emergent (as opposed to reductionism). It will further locate an operator immanent in the “self-thing” that propels development, in accord with the metaphysical principle of finality, which Lonergan adopts from Bergson.<sup>41</sup> On the level of intelligence, the operator is the dynamics

38 Habermas, *Truth and Validity*, 31-33; *Knowledge and Human Interests*, 306-308. For comparison and contrast of Habermas and Lonergan, see Christian Jacobs-Vandegeer, “Insight into the Better Argument: Habermas and Lonergan,” in *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 63[*Os Domínios da Inteligência: Bernard Lonergan e a Filosofia*] (2007), 415-429; “Insight into the Better Argument: Consciousness, Communication and Criticizability in Habermas and Lonergan,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 23 no. 2 (2005), 45-74.

39 *Insight*, 456-463.

40 *Ibid.*, 271 (thing), 275-279 (thing not an extroverted “body”), 538-544 (human being a unity of integrations).

41 *Ibid.*, 470-476 (finality), 490-492 (operative of development), 494-504 (human development), 555 (the pure desire to know as the operator of cognitional development); see William A. Mathews, *Lonergan’s Quest: A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight* (Toronto:

of consciousness that Voegelin, Taylor, and Habermas explore. The nature of the self as intelligible and intelligent makes this thing a person.<sup>42</sup> The metaphysical principle of the ontology of the good accords value to the person.<sup>43</sup> Still, does this kind of thing really exist? Is there a real unity to consciousness? Indeed can we really know the self? If there is a self, can we only know it indirectly by its objectifications, as thinkers from Dilthey to Ricoeur have alleged?<sup>44</sup> All these questions presuppose the self as an object to confront and presume consciousness as some kind of look. These questions are of deep concern in analytic philosophy, as Andrew Beards has shown, and the existential phenomenologists who speak of the self would, of course, refuse to investigate it in terms of metaphysical categories.<sup>45</sup> We have barely touched upon the metaphysics of the self, but our point is that without a viable metaphysics of the self political theory will ultimately flounder. Its further, relevant questions will be put off in continuous acts of obscurantism.

A second metaphysical issue concerns the polity. Does it have the metaphysical status of a thing, as essentialists might argue? Is it a universal that stands above its particulars (the citizens) as the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and as a thing that integrates lower manifolds, thus making

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University of Toronto Press, 2005), 377, for Lonergan's debt to Bergson's *Creative Evolution*; see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980*, vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 387, for Lonergan's reference to Bergson's *élan vital*.

42 *Insight*, 538-543; see McPartland, *Lonergan and the Philosophy of Historical Existence*, 215.

43 *Insight*, 628-630. To identify the good with the intelligibility of the universe is to identify as good the component of the universe that is both intelligible and intelligent.

44 If the self cannot be known directly by some inner look, then, according to the confrontation theory of truth, it can only be known by its objectifications as retrieved by some hermeneutical interplay. Dilthey, for example, would have us eschew any "psychological subtleties" that would claim to perceive internally the structures of the mind, for the structures of the mind "lie before us as something externally objectified and can become the subject matter of disciplined understanding." Wilhelm Dilthey, *Pattern and Meaning in History*, ed. H. P. Rickman (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 164. Parallel to Taylor's notion of the "engaged subject," Ricoeur would deny the transparency of a pure *cogito* and urge hermeneutical reflection on the structures and expressions of language, including symbols. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existentialist Philosophy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). Derrida radicalizes this rejection of pure subjectivity in his critique of Husserl. See Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, chap. 7; Andrew Beards, *Method in Metaphysics: Lonergan and the Future of Analytic Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 46-56.

45 Beards, *Method in Metaphysics*, chap. 4.



the citizens mere functions of its operations and, consequently, either things within the "big thing" or, in the extreme, not things at all? Or is it completely artificial? Can it be reduced entirely to the individuals who make it up, as nominalists argue? Or is it something in between, neither a thing nor a mere artifact? Related to these issues are questions about the common good. Is the common good a metaphysical entity subsuming the good of individuals? Or is the common good identical to the good of the individual citizens (Rousseau's "general will" or Feuerbach's and Marx's "species-being," both of which are concrete universals)? Or is the common good the sum of the goods of individuals (as utilitarians allege)? Or is the common good a good common to all citizens but not identical to the good of each individual?<sup>46</sup> All these questions are variations of the traditional metaphysical questions about the status of universals: Do forms reside in some noetic heaven? Do they exist only in individual substances? Are forms mere constructs of the human mind? Lonergan would resolve this complicated problem by his nuanced distinction between central and conjugate forms (where conjugate forms are real intelligibilities that reside only in things, defined by central forms, in their real relations to other things) and his inadequate real distinction among potency, form, and act (where essence is distinct from existence but not a thing distinct from another thing).<sup>47</sup> Lonergan's process metaphysics of "proportionate being," with its notions of schemes of recurrence and statistical laws, coupled with his concepts of mediation, self-mediation, and mutual self-mediation, helps define the polity as a reality but not a thing.<sup>48</sup> Cooperations and skills of the citizens create a network of relations, which function as schemes of recurrence, whose existence is dependent on the insights and decisions of the citizens. They mediate the polity. Common experiences, interpretations, judgments, and decisions constitute the political community and the political culture that sustain the polity. The polity can collapse but the individuals can continue to exist, if precariously. The personal values of the citizens rank higher than the vital, social, and cultural values of the polity. The intelligibility of the

46 The connection of these political and metaphysical themes is explored by Charles N. R. McCoy, *The Structure of Political Thought: A Study in the History of Ideas* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963).

47 *Insight*, 460-463, 513-514.

48 Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964*, chap. 8; *Third Collection*, p. 30; Beards, *Method in Metaphysics*, 320-326.



polity – as the decision-maker (the state) for the good of individual citizens and of various institutions and intersubjective communities - is neither the identity of the individual citizens nor the identity of the institutions and intersubjective communities under its sway. Still, the polity, as an intelligible good of order, perdures beyond the activities of the individuals as individuals, and even beyond the simple sum of activities of individuals. It is also beyond the intelligibility of the institutions of civil society, such as the family and the economy. The polity mediates the development of individuals, and since the polity consists of cooperations of individuals, it is the framework for mutual self-mediation. Thus it seems that the common good is not identical to the good of the individuals, neither being reduced to the individual goods, nor subsuming the individual goods.

A viable metaphysics will address such questions anew. It will inform and strengthen political philosophy. A more vigorous political philosophy can perhaps begin to play a role in the political culture. And if that happens, then in the pluralism of liberal democracy the voices of metaphysical positions may have a greater and legitimate role in the political dialogue.

Lonergan's metaphysics offers a unique start in that direction. So, in this respect, what is needed in Lonergan Studies? First, there is needed work on the metaphysics itself. Lonergan's brilliant treatment in *Insight* was only a sketch. He himself claims to outline a method for metaphysics. A treatise will follow. But the treatise will follow, he says, "not as a conclusion deduced by an electronic computer, but as a product of intelligence and reasonableness."<sup>49</sup> So Lonergan here is reiterating his invitation, given at the beginning of *Insight*, for collaboration.<sup>50</sup> Bluntly, we need metaphysicians. The collaboration would then carry over into political philosophy, where the metaphysical insights can be incorporated directly or indirectly into discourse about politics – and where the discourse will be the "product of intelligence and reasonableness."

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49 *Insight*, 513.

50 *Ibid.*, 7.

