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THE NOTION OF STRUCTURE¹

Bernard J. F. Lonergan

I AM NOT only extremely delighted but indeed honored to be here on this occasion. This is, after all, no ordinary day, nor is this an ordinary place, for the Aloisianum has a worldwide reputation — “Its voice has gone out to the ends of the earth”² — not only by reason of the annual meetings of outstanding philosophers who come here to engage in discussion and submit their dissertations for publication, but also on account of the massive project being undertaken here, of using mechanical and electronic means to facilitate a more thorough and accurate study of the works of St Thomas and to draw up new indices to them.³ And of

¹ A lecture delivered in Latin at the Collegium Aloisianum, Gallarate, Italy, on the feast of St Thomas Aquinas, March 7, 1964 (since transferred to January 28). A transcription of the tape recording of the lecture was printed in the student journal of the college, *Apertura*, vol. 1, no. 2 (May 1964) 117-123. This Latin transcription was reproduced as an Appendix to the doctoral dissertation of Luigi Patrini, *La Metafisica di Bernard Lonergan* (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, 1968) 176-197. In 1989 Michael Shields made another transcription, with notes, from a cassette recording of the lecture (TC 383, Lonergan Research Institute Library), as well as an English translation.

This translation has been revised for the present publication and footnotes have been provided, filling out in a few cases the references Lonergan gave as he spoke. These notes, therefore, are all editorial. In the Patrini edition the lecture is divided into numbered sections, 24 in all; we have not followed this numbering, but instead have inserted titles for the main divisions of the talk.

The whole lecture is closely paralleled by “Cognitional Structure,” written later in the same year for *Spirit as Inquiry: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lonergan* (Chicago: Saint Xavier College, 1964) 230-242, and republished in *Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 205-221.

“The Notion of Structure” is tentatively scheduled to appear in volume 16 of the University of Toronto Press edition of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan.

² The quotation is from Psalm 19:4. In the Catholic liturgy these words are applied to the apostles, and Lonergan’s application of them to the Collegium Aloisianum evoked much hearty laughter.

³ The reference here is to the work of Robert Busa. Fr Busa is still active at Gallarate, and has now put all the works of St Thomas onto a compact disc (CD-ROM), a second edition of which has just been made available.

course, since this is a very special day, the feast day of St Thomas Aquinas, our intellectual mentor and guide, it is only right that my talk here today should pay homage to him.

It is therefore altogether fitting to take St Thomas as our starting point, and accordingly I have chosen as a topic for us to consider and, as far as possible, to understand, the thought of Aquinas as set forth in his commentary *In Boethium De Trinitate*, question V, article 3.⁴

SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON ABSTRACTION

Before reading this passage itself, however, some preliminary observations may be helpful. This article deals with the question of mathematical abstraction; the solution is given in various steps, and it is these prior steps that our topic is concerned with. St Thomas begins as follows: "We must consider in what way the intellect is able to abstract according to its own operation." And he goes on to distinguish two intellectual operations: the first operation in which the question 'What is it?' is asked and the thing is then understood and defined, and the second operation in which the question asked is, 'Is it so?', and the evidence is weighed and a judgment made. He then points out that the second operation is not so much a matter of abstraction as of separation. Next, with regard to the first operation he says that the intellect "is able to abstract those things that in reality are not separate — not all of them, however, but some of them." It is this 'not all of them, but some' that I propose as our subject today.

Now you are all quite knowledgeable about abstraction, and so it is not my intention to add anything on that point; what I want to do is to look at those things that are not separated in the mind — that is to say, that are comprehended, that are understood together.

Aquinas, then, is saying that what is intrinsically ordered to something else "cannot be understood apart from that other." Abstraction is

⁴ The question in Article 3 is: "Utrum mathematica consideratio sit sine motu et materia de his quae sunt in materia." See Thomas von Aquin, *In Librum Boethii De Trinitate quaestiones quinta et sexta*, ed. Paul Wyser (Fribourg: Société Philosophique, and Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1948) 36, lines 9-10; Bruno Decker, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Expositio super Librum Boethii De Trinitate* (Leiden: Brill, 1955) 179, lines 6-7.

possible, he says, in this way: "As long as one thing does not depend on another according to the way they are naturally constituted, then it can be abstracted from the other by the intellect and so be understood apart from that other." And he gives examples: "A letter of the alphabet can be understood apart from a syllable, but not vice versa," for no one can say what a syllable is without thinking about letters; and again, "An animal can be understood apart from a foot." The foot may be removed, but the animal remains, "but not vice versa," for a foot is no longer a foot if the animal has ceased to be. Yet "whiteness can be understood apart from a man and vice versa;" for whiteness can exist and be thought of and understood even if nothing is said about a man, and the same holds for man even if there is no mention or thought of whiteness.

These instances of possible abstraction are the main point in that article because abstraction is the issue; but the other case is also worth noting and it is this case that I should like to consider here today.⁵

First, let me read the passage:

Therefore, when a nature, in accordance with that which constitutes its essential meaning and through which it is understood, is ordered to and dependent upon something else, then clearly that nature itself cannot be understood apart from that other.⁶

In other words, if that by which a nature is intelligible is intrinsically ordered to something else, you cannot abstract or prescind from that other and still understand that nature or thing. He gives the following instances:

... whether they are connected in the way that a part is connected to the whole, as in the case of a foot that cannot be understood without an understanding of animal; or whether they are connected in the way in which form is connected to matter, as a part is to its corresponding part or as an accident is to its subject. Snubness, for example, is unintelligible apart from the idea of nose; and this can be so even if the two things are separated in reality, as in the case of

⁵ After *casum*, 'case,' the final three or four words are indistinct on the tape, but the sense is clear.

⁶ *Quando ergo secundum hoc ...* : Wyser 38, 30; Decker 183, 6.

'father' which cannot be understood apart from understanding 'son' even though those relations belong to different individuals.⁷

The main source which St Thomas draws upon for this analysis is to be found in the seventh book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* where Aristotle discusses the parts of matter, the parts of form, and the parts of definition.⁸ You will find it in Aquinas's commentary, lect. IX-XII.⁹ Let us now briefly consider the examples he uses, to try to determine the sort of connection that is required if one thing is unable to be understood without the other.

A part cannot be understood without the whole. He takes organic parts, for example: a foot cannot be understood without an animal. Aristotle says that an eye that is removed is an eye only in an equivocal sense, since one cannot see with an eye that is outside one's body. Similarly, a lifeless finger is only equivocally a finger, since no one can do anything with a severed finger.

Form is unintelligible apart from matter. The human soul is a form, and is defined as "the first act of an organic body," or "the first act of a body that is capable of life."¹⁰ A consideration of any particular thing must include whatever is contained in its definition, or else all thinking about it becomes impossible. If intrinsic relation to a body is omitted from the notion of soul, you no longer have a soul but a separate substance, an angel. An angel is a subsistent form without any relation to body; what makes a soul a soul is precisely the fact that it has this intrinsic relation to a body.

Again, a part cannot be understood without a corresponding part. Fundamental elements in the Aristotelian system and again in St Thomas's are defined not by a proper definition but by some mutual proportion: as the eye is to sight so the ear is to hearing. And this is the proportion of matter to form, as St Thomas points out, *In IX Met.*, lect. 5,

⁷ ... sive sint coniuncta ... : Wyser 38, 34; Decker 183, 7.

⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7, chs. 10-12. 1034b 20 - 1037a 35.

⁹ *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis In Metaphysicam Aristotelis Commentaria*, ed. M.-R. Cathala (Turin: Marietti, 1935), lect. 9-12, §§ 1460-1465.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *De anima* 2, ch. 2, 412b 5 and 412a 21.

§1828 and following.¹¹ Likewise, as sight is to the act of seeing, hearing [*auditus*, the faculty of hearing] is to the act of hearing [*audiendum*]. What is the nature of one's hearing [*auditus*] if not in order to hear? It has an intrinsic relation to the act of hearing. In the same way sight is intrinsically related to seeing. And the eye, what is an eye? An eye is to sight as the body is to the soul. There is an intrinsic relation between them, and one cannot be understood without the other. What is an eye? It is the organ of sight, and no other definition can be given.

An accident cannot be understood without a subject. You will all remember, I am sure, Aristotle's lengthy disquisition on snubness. The adjectives 'snub' and 'concave' mean the same, but with this one qualification: 'snub' means 'concave' — not anything concave, however, but a concave nose: no snubness without a nose! An accident cannot be separated from a subject, for otherwise it would no longer be an accident. If in a definition of a circle there is no mention of a plane surface, you do not have the definition of a circle. The existence [*esse*] of an accident is to exist-in [*inesse*], according to the essential idea of accident. It has an intrinsic relation to something else, and that is why the eucharistic accidents, although not actually inhering in a substance, still remain accidents — they do not become substances. Accident as such and substance as such do not depend upon actual inherence or actual non-inherence, but the basic notion of accident flows from the essence of what accident is; and according to its definition, an accident is that which is found in another, as a circle is found in a plane surface. If someone were to say that a circle is a locus of points equidistant from a center and say nothing about a plane surface, that would not be a good definition of a circle, since any line drawn on a sphere would be a circle according to that faulty definition.

Again, a relative term is unintelligible without its correlative. 'Father' cannot be understood without understanding 'son.' And note that this is a matter of *understanding*: it doesn't mean that a father ceases to exist when his son dies! It is not a matter of existence. Nor does calling someone by the name 'father' involve naming his son. We do very well to address the Father by name, without, however, naming his Son, and we do this very

¹¹ Cathala (see note 9), §§ 1828-1829.

frequently;¹² but the Father is unintelligible apart from an understanding of the Son. The point at issue here, therefore, is understanding — the understanding of those things which are understood together, or of those which are not.

Accordingly, just as we can speak about abstraction, that is, about understanding one thing separately from another, so also we can speak about comprehension, that is, about the simultaneous grasp of those things that are understood together. And just as there is this comprehension of things that are understood together, so also is there a structure to the things understood together. The difference, however, between their comprehension and their structure is this, that comprehension is on the part of the knowing subject while structure belongs to that which is known. Comprehension is the understanding of several elements together, and those several things as understood together exhibit a structure: they are not understood separately one from another.

Now, it is not my intention to speak to you about structure in the abstract according to some very general notion of structure, but rather, more concretely, about three particular structures.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THING KNOWN

There is, first, the structure of the thing known — just by way of introducing the topic, since this structure is well known to you here. Next there is the structure of knowledge, which is similar to the structure of the thing known. Thirdly there is the structure of objectivity, which links the first two structures: we know reality because of the objectivity of our knowledge. And since we are dealing here with that structure to which comprehension corresponds, we shall not be referring to all knowledge or all things or all objectivity but only to those things which we can comprehend, and therefore not about those realities which we cannot comprehend but can know only mediately, imperfectly, and by analogy. Thus we shall not speak about the structure of angels, nor shall we ask whether there is any structure in God, for these realities are not the proper

¹² An obvious reference to the Lord's prayer, the "Our Father," as indicated by the words *optime nominamus* and *saepissime*.

objects of our intellect in this life, but are known only by some analogy — by way of affirmation, negation, and supereminence. By the same token, we shall not speak about any and all knowledge, but about our knowledge, knowledge that we can have in the manner proper to us; nor about any sort of objectivity, but about the objectivity of our knowledge, that which we can have in a proper way.

First of all, then, the structure of things we know. According to Aristotle, as you know, a material thing is composed of this matter and this form, and St Thomas teaches the same. But also, as we have just said, matter is matter by reason of its relation to form, and a material form is a material form because it is meant to inform some matter: one cannot be understood without reference to the other. Although there are such things as separate forms, they are an altogether different kind of form. These two, therefore, matter and form, make up a structure. If we go beyond Aristotle into St Thomas's doctrine, we learn that essence and contingent existence also form a structure: neither one is intelligible without the other. Every finite existence is the act of being of some essence, and every essence is ordered to existence: one cannot be understood without the other. You can talk about one without talking about the other, but there can be no understanding of one without understanding the other. But essence is the same as form and matter, and so we have a more complex structure. Existence and essence form one structure, but essence is itself structured: it is composed of form and matter.

In more general terms, we can say that the object known has a structure made up of potency, form, and act — second act, that is. Structures therefore are not limited to two elements only; a structure can just as well be made up of three, if these three are only intelligible when taken together. Moreover, there is a radical difference between the elements of any structure and the whole which possesses that structure; hence our wonderment when, in first-year philosophy, we learn that the principles of being do not themselves exist but are that by which something exists. Matter is not a thing, nor is form a thing, nor is existence a thing, nor is a thing made up of three things. There is only one thing, and yet those three are not nothing. They themselves are not, but by them something is. In its metaphysical analysis a thing is not itself composed of

things but of principles by which things are. I am laying great stress upon this difference, because we shall find the same difference in our knowing and again in objectivity. I am sure you are quite knowledgeable about this analysis of a material object, but perhaps not all of you have thought about the possibility of something similar in knowledge itself and in objectivity.

Before leaving the first structure we want to consider, that of the things we know, let us take a few moments to consider things as known scientifically. We all know things quite well, but, as Eddington tells us,¹³ he had in his room not just one table but two. One was visible, rather dark in color, solid, of such and such dimensions, and so forth — what we all know as a table. But the other table, well, in a way it was not another table and yet in a way it was totally different, because it was not solid but mostly empty space, it consisted of electrons which cannot be imagined, it was not completely stationary but in constant agitation, and so on. What about things, then, as known by science? — whether we are talking about science as it is today, or ten years from now, or in the next century, or in that ultimate state of scientific bliss when absolutely all phenomena will be understood. In every case, what do we have? We have a theory, verified, in a number of individuals. A theory is that by which a form in things is known; verification is that through which existence in things is known; and is so far as a theory is verified in a number of instances, we have that by which matter is known.

So then, things as known scientifically and as known metaphysically have the same structure — how amazing!¹⁴ What then is the difference? Metaphysics proceeds according to an intention of the end, and we know that we intend an end when we ask, 'What is it?' We intend the end when we ask, 'Is it so?' And in asking whether it is so, we expect an answer, and that answer will be either 'It is so' or 'It is not': we are making an assertion about existence. We ask, 'What is it?' and expect an answer, and that

¹³ Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928) xi-xv.

¹⁴ Some years earlier Lonergan had devoted a special paper to this question. Written for the fourth international Thomistic congress and titled "Isomorphism of Thomist and Scientific Thought," it was first published in the acts of the congress (*Sapientia Aquinatis*, vol. 1, 1955); it has been reprinted in *Collection* (see note 1) 133-141.

answer will be some form, some object of understanding as such, and therefore we say that forms are in things. And these forms are in many things; the form is absolutely the same, and so we posit something that is known by the senses — the 'empirical residue,' as it is referred to elsewhere.¹⁵

In metaphysics we proceed according to an intention of the end, and because we do so we have what is had by science today and ten or a hundred years from now and in that final state of scientific bliss. But scientists do not proceed according to an intention of the end. They want to attain an end, of course; they want to actually understand and not just know that there is something there to be understood, and therefore they have to speak in a determinate way. And because it is very difficult to speak in a determinate way, they continue to progress, trusting that eventually they will arrive at a theory that is true; but for the time being they believe that they are coming closer to the end. There is, therefore, not only a structure in things, but a structure that is known in two ways: known in metaphysics according to an intention of the end, and known in the sciences according to some degree of attainment of the end; but it is the same structure in both cases. And since the first structure has a relation to the second, it can be called *heuristic* with regard to the second, a means whereby the second is found. 'Heuristic' means that which helps in finding something. How do scientists go about finding what they seek? By asking 'What?' and 'Why?' and 'How?' they pose questions that relate to understanding, and by asking again whether the particular thing is really so, they are verifying.

So then: we have considered things as known and in them have found structures, and indeed similar structures, whether we are considering metaphysical or scientific knowing.

THE STRUCTURE OF KNOWING

Let us move on now to consider another heading, another structure: the structure within our knowing itself. I have already indicated that we shall

¹⁵ Evidently a reference to *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (first published, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957; 5th ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.) See the index under Empirical residue.

find the same ambiguity in our knowing as that which is familiar to metaphysicians regarding matter and form and thing. Matter is not a thing, but part of a thing; form is not a thing, but part of a thing. If a person sees, hears, smells, tastes, and feels, does he have knowledge or not? Perhaps you will say he does. Certainly it cannot be said that there is no knowledge here at all. Yet, if someone has these sense experiences but has no understanding of them, shall we say he has knowledge? We are more inclined to regard him as being stupid. One who has sense experiences that he does not understand is more stupid than knowing. He experiences things but does not understand them. This, therefore, is why we say that we must distinguish between knowledge in a general sense and knowledge in a specific sense. There is knowledge in a general sense in any cognitional operation, whether it be seeing, feeling, hearing, being conscious, understanding, defining, reflecting, weighing evidence, or judging. All of these are cognitive acts and all of them contain knowledge in some sense or another. Knowledge belongs to them as reality belongs to the principles of being: like matter and form and existence, they themselves are not but through them something is.

In a somewhat similar way, if seeing and understanding and judging are considered separately, if they are not comprehended together, if one prescind from their structure, they themselves are not knowledge but through them knowledge is generated. Likewise, if someone experiences and understands, does he have knowledge? If he pays no attention to judgment, to the evidence, he is rather under the influence of a mythic mentality; he is incapable of distinguishing between astronomy and astrology, between chemistry and alchemy, between history and legend, unless he makes a judgment. A person with this mentality experiences, he understands, and indeed takes great delight in his intelligence, but he falls short in the area of judgment. Does he have knowledge? Not really. Does a person have knowledge if he experiences and understands and yet doubts? We do not say that doubting is knowing. One who doubts does not yet know; he hesitates between 'Yes' and 'No' and yet he experiences and understands, he may even have beautiful theories and write whole books about them. But does he really know? He himself is not certain: he has doubts. Knowledge, therefore, does have parts. If someone judges but

judges wrongly, does he have knowledge? We should say rather that he is wrong, he is in error. To err is not the same as to know.

So we see that in knowing there is something very similar to what we found in our metaphysical analysis of things. There is a knowing that is properly so called, proper to human beings, a knowing that is found only in man, not in animals nor in angels. This knowing is a composite: it has an experiential element, an element of understanding, and an element of judging, and if one of these is lacking you no longer have knowing that is specifically human. What is one doing when he is using his intelligence but not experiencing anything? He is making things up. He understands quite well what he is imagining, but he is not understanding real things as they are themselves. He must verify to see whether there are sensible data that are the same as what he pictures in his imagination. Or take the case of one who judges without having understood the question: does he truly judge? It would seem not. These three are bound up together: there is no human knowing, no cognition that is specifically human, human knowing that deals with the proper object of human knowledge, unless there enter into it in concert the element of experience, the element of understanding, and the element of judging. And so we have in our knowing that threefold structure that we also find in things that are metaphysically known and scientifically known; nor is this surprising, since it is we who have metaphysical knowledge and who also have scientific knowledge. The structures replicate themselves, since they flow from the same source; and this similarity the structures have to one another we may call *isomorphism*, from *isos* and *morphê*, 'having the same form, the same structure.'

STRUCTURE OF THE LINK BETWEEN KNOWING AND THE KNOWN: OBJECTIVITY

We come now to the third heading of the topic we are considering. Not only is there a relation between our knowing and what we know, but this relation itself is known, and inasmuch as it is known we have the well-known relation between knowledge and reality — objectivity;¹⁶ and this

¹⁶ What Lonergan actually said here was *cognitio*, 'knowledge.' But it seems clear from the context that he meant to say *obiectivitas*, since this is the third point or heading of the lecture; see page 4, above, where he outlines the three structures he intends to

belongs to the very nature of our knowing. Now this relation can be considered in two ways: as intended, that is, under the aspect of conscious finality, and as known. In our knowing we find not only experience, understanding, and judging, but also the dynamisms by which we are moved forward from one level to another. When we have a simple experience, our agent intellect lights up and we ask questions. Our intellectual consciousness is aroused and we ask the questions, 'What is this?' 'Why?' This is how we begin to be different from animals. Here we are moved forward from experiencing towards understanding as we ask the questions, 'What is it?'; 'Why is it so?' And after we have understood, there is a second movement forward when we ask another question, 'Is it?'; 'Is this the way it really is?' St Thomas wrote many books, and what was he doing? He was answering the question, '*Utrum ... ?*', 'Whether ... ?' I don't know how many thousand *Utrum*'s there are in the works of St Thomas, but everything he wrote was in answer to an '*Utrum ... ?*' Thus the question 'Is it?' is a step forward from understanding to judging. And yet, these questions are not totally different: they have 'is' as a common element. We are seeking to know not only 'what' but also 'is'; not only 'whether' but also 'is.' These two questions have a common root, the intention of being, the intention of existence. We intend existence; there is in us a natural desire or drive of the intellect towards existence, by which sensible data are raised to the level of the intelligible by the question, 'What is it?', and what we have understood is raised to the level of judgment by the question, 'Is it?'

Now, we not only intend existence, or being, but this same intention also asks about itself whether in fact it has succeeded in attaining its end. This is the question about objectivity. It is true, in a sense, that we spontaneously and naturally arrive at objectivity in our knowing. But we also think about it: 'What is objectivity?', we ask ourselves. Well, the first thing to be noted about objectivity is that every science, every philosophy, is, so to speak, an overcoming of myth. By 'myth' I mean something that is most certain, very obvious, quite evident to anyone who has the least bit of common sense — and yet is false. That the earth is flat, for example, and

consider, and the third-last sentence of the lecture, "... objectivity, which establishes the link between the knower and the known."

such things — that is what I mean by 'myth.' And there are myths not only in the field of science but also in philosophy. There is a myth about objectivity that we all know about. What is objectivity? Well, we picture in our imagination — or better still, let us demonstrate objectivity by this example. Look: here is my hand, here is my eye; the eye sees the hand, the hand is the object, the eye is the subject; objectivity is the fact that the subject transcends itself and reaches to the object. What could be clearer?

Now let us drop that notion of objectivity and look at the matter concretely. We find not one objectivity, but three. First there is objectivity that is called empirical, which consists merely in the appearance of the datum or data themselves. Is my hand white? Is this paper white? If you have answered 'yes' to the first question, you cannot give the same answer to the second! Here you have experiential, or empirical, objectivity. This sort of objectivity is the most important fulcrum of the empirical sciences. When a question is asked the answer to which depends upon the clear evidence of the data themselves, then it is that scientists are most content. And they all ask questions that as much as possible can be answered in that way.

But we can give still another example of objectivity, of a quite different kind. This is normative objectivity. If you make statements that are self-contradictory, what you say cannot be true. Take, for example, the systematization of mathematics worked out by Russell and Whitehead.¹⁷ It was necessary to have some postulate regarding the steps. Russell's postulate, according to his critics, goes like this: no proposition that covers all classes together is valid; any proposition referring to all classes together is invalid. That is Russell's postulate, and that postulate is self-contradictory, because that postulate itself is a proposition and it refers to all classes together, and so it is itself invalid. We have, therefore, a contradiction here. And where there is a contradiction, there is an absence of objectivity. This is normative objectivity, the objectivity that regards the use of our understanding. From data we proceed to concepts, hypotheses, theories.

¹⁷ Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, *Principia Mathematica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2 vols., 1925-1927 (1st ed., 1910-1912). For Lonergan on Russell's postulate, see his *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 228 (in the 1964 lecture, "Philosophical Positions with Regard to Knowing," 214-243).

This process can properly be carried on according to the norms of intelligence or not. If not, there is no normative objectivity; if so, there is normative objectivity. This second objectivity is of a quite different kind from the first one which consisted in comparing the whiteness of one's hand with that of a piece of paper, done by simply taking a look.

But there is still a third objectivity. Let us say that someone, enjoying the holiday on the feast of St Thomas, goes for a walk in the woods, and at one point his companion says to him, "Look at that big dog over there!" And the other one says, "Are you sure it's not a wolf?" Well, what is meant by certitude in this case? If you have certitude, you have something absolute. And this is not some sort of celestial absoluteness, but the absoluteness of this particular and contingent assertion: "This is not a wolf, it is just a dog." It is another kind of objectivity. All that belongs to normative objectivity has intrinsic universality; but the absoluteness in this case is found in the particular and contingent. Yet it is this that gives solidity to all our knowledge.

Objectivity, therefore, also appears to be a composite. It must have an experiential element and a normative element; but further, it must have an absolute element, so that an assertion may be made absolutely, without fear of error, as the saying goes. These three taken together make up one objectivity. Normative objectivity is worthless unless we begin from data that are really and obviously given. Normative objectivity makes the connection between data and a concept, between data and an hypothesis, between data and a theory, or any conceptual system. And when it comes to making a judgment, the essential note of every judgment, in my opinion, lies in the fact that it attains the unconditioned, that is to say, what is virtually unconditioned: it has conditions, but those conditions have been fulfilled. How do you know that that was a dog and not a wolf? Well, there are conditions that have to be fulfilled for it to be a wolf, and there are conditions to be fulfilled if it is a dog. And according to whether those conditions are or are not fulfilled, you will be able to tell whether it is a wolf or a dog. The same holds for every judgment. When we have a virtually unconditioned, a conditioned whose conditions are fulfilled, then we have arrived at something absolute, and we say, 'It is.'

Let me briefly sum up what I have been saying. We not only abstract one thing from another — that is true in some cases, but not in all. But those things which are understood together, or comprehended, also have a structure to them: one is intrinsically ordered to another. This ordering can be a series. (I have given instances in which there are only three elements ordered one to another; but the number can be increased.) And such is the structure that is found in things that are known, whether known metaphysically or scientifically. A similar structure is present in our knowing because it is called knowing in different senses depending upon whether we are referring only to sense experience or only to understanding or only to judging; and it is called knowing in a still different sense when we are referring to all these three taken together. The same holds for objectivity, which establishes the link between the knower and the known. Such is the objectivity of human knowledge: as knowing is a composite, so also is the objectivity of knowledge a composite. Just as there is an experiential element in knowing, so there is experiential objectivity; as there is an intellectual element in knowing, so there is normative objectivity; and as there is a rational element in knowing, so there is absolute objectivity.

You have been admirably patient, and I am sincerely grateful to you all for honoring me by the invitation extended to me by Father Rector, and for your kindness to me on this occasion.

THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY
AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES:
THE CONTRIBUTION OF LONERGAN'S
EPISTEMOLOGICAL THEORY

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1

THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY, it goes without saying, must needs build upon the cultures in which it is situated. Traditional African cultures, so far as moral thinking is concerned, are objectivistic. A boy or a girl is initiated into and encouraged to grow towards an objective ideal of what it is to be, for example, a Zulu or Mosotho, man or woman. The very notion of 'being a human person' admits of degrees: one *becomes* a person, through participation in the community.

But such objectivistic ethics finds little resonance in modern Western culture, a culture associated with the development of the African university. On the contrary, once the empirical method began to be systematically applied not only to physical reality but also to human behavior moral values came to be seen as fully intelligible in terms of their social genesis. Value-systems are thought to be relative to one particular society or other. Our era, argues Samir Amin, is characterized by a cultural relativism which in the West is expressed by praise for provincialism ("all aspirations for universalism are rejected in favor of a 'right to difference'"¹ and all cultures have their "individual,

¹ Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, tr. R. Moore (London: Zed, 1989) 116.

incommensurable histories"²), and in the Third World by a wave of fundamentalisms.

The view that any person has the right — and even power — to judge others is replaced by attention to the relativity of those judgments. Without a doubt, such judgments can be erroneous, superficial, hasty or relative. No case is ever definitively closed; debate always continues. But that is precisely the point. It is necessary to pursue debate and not to avoid it on the grounds that the views that anyone forms about others are and always will be false: that the French will never understand the Chinese (and vice versa), that men will never understand women, etc; or in other words, that there is no human species, but only 'people.'³

Making a similar point Mary Midgley mocks the extreme individualism associated with ethical relativism. The current moral obsession of Western society, she writes,⁴ is that of "a self-righteous preoccupation with putting down self-righteousness": no one, it is supposed in a quite self-contradictory fashion, is justified in censuring anyone else.

I want to argue here that this apparent conflict between on the one hand the standards of empirical method and the aims of the university, and on the other hand the outlook associated with traditional African cultures, is resolvable. The solution lies in understanding the history of the rise of the social sciences as academic disciplines, and the challenge this presented to the classical western philosophical view of morality. For such classical morality was, like traditional African ethics, objectivistic. As in the African case there arises, with the challenge in particular of the social sciences, a need for the reformulation of such ethics.⁵

² Amin, *Eurocentrism* 135.

³ Amin, *Eurocentrism* 146-147.

⁴ Mary Midgley, *Wisdom, Information and Wonder* (London: Routledge, 1989) 174.

⁵ See also, on the situation of the African thinker, Kwame A. Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1992) 139: "Because they are Africans rooted to at least some degree in their traditional cultures and, at the same time, intellectuals trained in the traditions of the West, they face a special situation. They may choose to borrow the tools of Western philosophy for their work. But if they wish to pursue such conceptual inquiries in the thought-worlds of their own traditions, they are bound to do so with a highly developed awareness of the challenges of Western ideas ... They are bound also to make choices within Western traditions."

2

In the dominant modern perception the classical tradition in ethics is perceived as being uncritical (another term used is 'dogmatic') since a certain theory of human psychology, often implicitly dualist, seems to be presupposed. Our rationality, it had been supposed, functions autonomously of the influences, biological and social, operating on us (or rather on our bodies). A certain set of ends is said to pertain to human behavior universally, regardless of circumstances.

The modern period is characterized by the loss of the sense of a predetermined place in the cosmos; by an awareness of cultures other than that of Europe; by the awareness of historical change within a single society; by the imperative, thrust upon us by the availability of the appropriate technology, to choose our life-style, to remake our environment. The upshot of these changes has been the emergence of a heightened sense of 'subjectivity.' All that we do today, the little and the great events, is photographed or otherwise recorded, for our self-scrutiny, our further consideration. The centrality of an abstract concept of human nature is gradually replaced by an historical awareness of how human beings *see* themselves in different periods, what they value, how they create meaning. Human responsibility is oriented toward our participation in forming history, modifying and transcending to some extent all conditioning social influences.

To this mentality Aristotle's argument that an understanding of the 'function' of human life will determine *the* normative notion of happiness seems antediluvian.⁶ The classical view sees human nature as the same everywhere and always, contrasting the abstract and universal truths with the concrete and particular instantiations. Casuistry is the application of the universal truths about human nature (metaphysical and moral) to particular cases. But the particular is inexplicable except by the stipulation of a chance occurrence, the way things happen to fall, and what is a chance occurrence is not subject to scientific explanation. The laws of

⁶ Aristotle does of course raise the question as to *whether* 'man' has a function. But for his answer he looks to Nature, tending to subsume human beings under the categories of a biological metaphysics (*Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. David Ross [London: Oxford, 1966] 1097b).

human nature remain unmodified by circumstances and context. Human consciousness is biased towards the formulation of an idea of human nature in terms appropriate to one culture only, but is unaware of such bias which is indicated in the neglect, in such formulation, of any account of the cultural (and historical) *variation* in the pattern of particulars characteristic of human behavior.⁷

The moral objectivity associated with the classical tradition was later formulated in terms of natural law, or the law of human nature. From the contemporary perspective this approach seems to discount the particular individual's subjective experience of those variable and changing circumstances which confront one in the course of one's moral deliberations. The imperative of self-determination has replaced the centrality of the imperative for one's desires to submit to the rule of the rational side of our nature. The norms that do exist, it is said, are constructed, not discovered in 'nature.' The principle of 'universalizability' for example expresses the implicitly agreed conditions for social living (contractarian ethics), while according to utilitarianism ethics is based on the principle of maximizing human happiness in the sense of 'counting votes,' with no predetermined character assigned to the content of such happiness.

Hegel introduced a contrary theme into western philosophy: that to be a subject is to be in self-conscious relation to others.⁸ It is, he argued, the existence and appropriation of such personal influences as these that makes us what we are. In this way Hegel turned the critical searchlight of modern scientific method towards the human subject itself, a move that was rapidly developed (without the baggage of Hegel's philosophical idealism) into the distinct disciplines of the various social sciences. Much

⁷ A good example is the way in which the place that sex occupies on the moral map has in classical ethics been taken to be a constant. The writings of Foucault have served to disabuse us of that notion: modern conceptions differ radically from those of ancient Greece, according to which heterosexuality was less of a moral issue than was the attitude of control or submission. See Michael Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, tr. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1985) esp. 187ff.

⁸ "Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it is only by being acknowledged or 'recognized.' The conception of this its unity in its duplication, of infinitude realizing itself in self-consciousness, has many sides to it and encloses within it elements of varied significance" (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* [New York: Harper Torchbook, 1967] 229).

of Hegel's insight fits in with the traditional African concept of 'ubuntu,' humanness: to be a person is to be in relation to other persons, to become oneself through others — "motho ke motho ka batho," in the Sesotho proverb.⁹ But the question remains as to how one is to take the social sciences — in particular, perhaps, for the African academic enterprise, where this idea still has purchase as a *moral* imperative.

Typically, the social scientist correlates sets of data and interprets these through grasping statistical trends apparent in them. But what is the status of such statistical trends? Does the understanding of the social forces operative in our lives replace a previous interpretive schema in terms of moral values, and so on? In other words, is it suggested that our notion of human freedom and responsibility — the foundation for attributing praise and blame to human actions — is shown up as naive by the social sciences? Is human behavior determined? Where does that leave the doctrine of basic human rights? Or the conviction, for example, that the struggle against apartheid and its legacy is objectively just? Is there an objective moral basis for the legal system? Is there any ultimate reason to be moral? If not, how is one to justify traditional moral laws at all? What is it to live a happy and fulfilled life? How is one to evaluate the traditional African ideas and values associated with marriage? Unless provision is made for the organized discussion of such questions at the university, rationality as such is bound eventually to fall into disrepute ('postmodernism'), and a rule-of-thumb moral relativism take over in the student's mind. An easy prey will be found for individualism and materialism, for the needs of the industrial machine to dominate and gradually undermine the needs of local cultures. What is likely is an 'inverse Eurocentrism,' an unreflective parochialism.¹⁰

⁹ Literally, a person is a person through persons; the proverb also exists in the Nguni languages (Zulu and Xhosa): *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. The normative Nguni term 'ubuntu' is nowadays frequently evoked by South African leaders.

¹⁰ Amin warns against "a sterile confrontation between the Eurocentrism of some and the inverted Eurocentrism of others ... in an atmosphere of destructive fanaticism" (Amin, *Eurocentrism* 146).

3

In addressing these questions we are faced with the weight of a scientific tradition which has defined itself largely in opposition to pre-critical notions of a normative human nature. In the classical conception reality is ordered by a rational principle which can be observed in the regularity of the planetary movements. The laws of the universe are thus the laws of thought, and they are described by the science of logic. Human behavior too must be brought into harmony with these metaphysical truths. Moral science is concerned with the correct reasoning from laws revealed in tradition. Such laws are generally known and the problem is to apply them to particular cases.

The modern period is characterized by a reaction, beginning with Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* in 1620,¹¹ against these metaphysical certainties of the medieval era. The objectivity associated with scientific knowledge is contrasted with human subjective reality, the realm of goals and values. Human knowing is thought of either in terms simply of sensing, as in empiricism, or else in terms of the conceptual or interpretive schemes understood to be underlying the phenomenal manifold, as in rationalism. In either case in order to *know* one places oneself outside of the reality one is investigating, eliminating, as far as possible, subjective elements. There is the problem of the duality of objective and subjective perspectives, of reality as verified and public, and, on the other hand, as experienced and private.¹²

In modern social science it is our experienced reality that is documented and the data correlated. Case studies seem to give insights into psychological or social realities. Equally clearly they do not fit Plato's criterion for true knowledge, namely knowledge valid at all times and all places. There would therefore have seemed good reason to drop the whole edifice of classical metaphysics and ethics. It is the inability of the classical view of knowledge to incorporate the facts of our diverse

¹¹ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, tr. R. Ellis and J. Spedding (London: Routledge, 1905).

¹² For a clear description of the philosophical problems raised by the duality of subjective and objective perspectives, see T. Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (London: Cambridge, 1979) esp. ch. 14.

experience, as well as the obvious successes of modern, experience-based and experimentally-confirmed science, that has led to the rejection of theories of ethics based on so-called 'human nature.' And this has meant that there is a foundational problem at the heart of contemporary moral philosophy.

This situation constitutes a dilemma in terms of the aim of the African university to embody the scientific spirit without destroying traditional culture. But of late the dominant view of science has come under a radical critique, amongst others by postmodernists. One of the most impressive of such critiques is that given by Nicholas Maxwell,¹³ a scientist-turned-philosopher. Maxwell argues that the dominant view of scientific inquiry, which he calls 'standard empiricism,' undermines any attempt to grow in one's understanding of what values, what projects, merit advocating. For such understanding is of a quite different nature from scientific knowledge thus conceived. In standard empiricism, he argues, the former kind of knowledge is deemed to have no place in rational inquiry.¹⁴ While scientific understanding is agreed to be objective, impersonal, factual, rational, predictive, testable, and scientific, any genuine example of the appreciation of *goals* of action — 'person-to-person' understanding — would, it is thought, lack all the above features. The latter would, on the contrary be subjective, personal, emotional and evaluative (and thus non-factual), intuitive (and thus non-rational), non-predictive, untestable, and unscientific.¹⁵

And this, Maxwell argues, has disastrous practical consequences, for thereby such person-to-person understanding is downgraded. But in order to promote the understanding and achievement of what is of value, the person-to-person understanding must be considered — from an 'objective' point of view — as prior: we need to "enter imaginatively into the other person's life-problems and possible solutions." The Enlightenment aim of promoting individual happiness cannot be achieved

¹³ Nicholas Maxwell (1986).

¹⁴ Standard empiricism is based on what Maxwell terms the philosophy of 'knowledge,' as opposed to 'wisdom.' Its central tenet is that values have no place in rational inquiry, and this is common to a variety of instantiations of the type from Francis Bacon to Karl Popper. See Maxwell 36-37.

¹⁵ Maxwell 181-184.

"if individual people cannot empathetically understand those different from themselves."

The great danger is that in a vast, complex and diverse world people, instead of being enriched by diversity, will merely come to feel threatened and isolated by it, and will as a result hunger for some form of collectivism or nationalism (of the left or right) which banishes individual liberty and diversity.¹⁶

Maxwell's critique of modern epistemology is shared by postmodernism. Postmodernism concludes to a radical skepticism about the capacity of language to make transparent the proposition. Maxwell simply points out that the notion that scholarship and science have a 'pure' dimension, a value for their own sake, makes sense only if these are understood as part of contributing to people realizing what is of real value. And this can only happen if primary recognition is given to people articulating their personal problems of knowledge and understanding and proposing solutions.

All this is sabotaged when scholarly and scientific research is sharply dissociated from personal problem-solving in life as demanded by the philosophy of knowledge. ... Scholarship and science tend to become esoteric, formal, scholastic and decadent, remote from the interests and concerns of non-academic life, pursued for the sake of academic career and status rather than for the sake of shared personal understanding.¹⁷

Lonergan has a similar critique. He compares the current situation to one prevailing in a primitive society: that of the Trobriand islanders observed by Malinowski. Malinowski pointed out that while in matters of practical living the islanders exercise their rational faculties (taking for example the law of cause and effect in its proper way), beyond that realm intelligence yields to myth and magic. No human emancipation here of the kind associated with the Enlightenment. But what about contemporary society? Lonergan comments that the tendency is to be content

¹⁶ Maxwell 186.

¹⁷ Maxwell 59.

merely to make more cultivated and more civilized the intelligent and rational part of Trobriand living, while maintaining a surrounding no man's land which used to be inhabited by myth and magic but which is now empty — we do not admit, Here be strange beasts; we simply do not bother about it. The real problem of human development is the problem of occupying this territory, this blank, with intelligence and reasonableness, just as we have occupied the territory that can be controlled by sensible consequences.¹⁸

Either this area is brought within the compass of rational inquiry (that is, the questions there are assumed to *make sense*), or irrationality on a large scale will move in to occupy the vacuum.

Maxwell's analysis is all the more telling for the purposes of this paper because he identifies himself with the Enlightenment tradition rather than any form of classical ethical naturalism. But it does not address the specific problems raised for the university in the context of traditional African culture and moral values. I refer to the problem of integrating, building on, and developing the deposit of wisdom about the moral life which comes to us from traditional culture, whether African or Western. For such wisdom has classically been expressed in terms of a normative conception of human nature. And in the modern period 'nature' has come to designate the pre-human dimension of reality, and is contrasted with the social and historical. To quote Lonergan again:

History, then, differs radically from nature. Nature unfolds in accord with law. But the shape and form of human knowledge, work, social organization, cultural achievement, communication, community, personal development, are involved in meaning ... So it is that man stands outside the rest of nature, that he is a historical being, that each man shapes his own life but does so only in interaction with the traditions of the communities in which he happens to have been born and, in turn, these traditions themselves are but the deposit left him by the lives of his predecessors.¹⁹

The question that arises from the above remarks is as follows: Does our historical conditioning preclude the operation of free will and the

¹⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 5 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 101.

¹⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972) 81.

applicability of traditional categories of moral responsibility? Or is it rather — as Lonergan suggests above — that such conditioning enables us to appropriate our lives through the lives of others and the influences of the social structures?

On the dominant view in the social sciences the first alternative must be true. Science in the modern age has been conceived as inquiry into and knowledge of non-statistical causal laws determinative of actual events. Lonergan terms this the 'classical' concept of science. On such a conception the social forces can only be understood as operating deterministically. Social scientists are faced with the prospect that their contribution to our understanding of *how we should live* will be largely neglected. Further, the integrity of the discipline is sometimes taken to conflict with any belief in the existence of objective moral values, which are seen as epiphenomenal (an exception being made for the cases when the social science itself is directed to the ends of social development, justice, and so on — *moral ends*). This is a methodological point about what constitutes true knowledge in general. The notion that science provides the only knowledge worthy of the name, is the central philosophical 'myth' that has accompanied the rise of modern Western culture. It finds expression for example in the program to map what are called 'folk-psychological intuitions' about our powers of self-determination to what are supposed to be the *scientifically* established truths of the matter (in one version, meaning brain activity).²⁰ Moral values are understood in the same philosophical tradition to be established by contracted agreements among individuals performing utilitarian calculations. It is true that knowledge that can be put to practical use in technology (as scientific knowledge can) does have an undeniable reality or importance. So do the outcomes of individuals' utilitarian calculations (which will determine what can be produced and marketed to them at a fair profit). But a philosophy whose greatest influences are notions such as these could not adequately fulfil the project of re-expressing traditional African belief-systems and values. One thinks in particular of the fundamental convictions that "human persons

²⁰ See for example P. Smith and O.R. Jones, *The Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

transcend the realm of the merely material, and also that in order to develop as persons we need to be empowered by others."²¹ There is therefore a need for a framework of discussion which allows for a critical appropriation of such ideas.²²

In the following section it will be argued that such a framework is indeed provided by Lonergan's understanding of scientific method. On Lonergan's understanding, knowledge given in science does not undermine our ideas about the possibility of self-determination. Indeed scientific knowledge presupposes the further, strictly philosophical understanding of the norm of critical knowing. That this is the case is perhaps most clearly seen when one analyzes the nature of statistical method.

4

The 'standard empiricist' view of knowing posits a notion of scientific objectivity achieved through the elimination of subjective elements. Lonergan presents an alternative view of knowing which does not presuppose the dualism of subject and object but entails a heightening of the presence to self. Objectivity is seen as the fruit of fidelity to the norms intrinsic to the process of coming to know anything at all, of authentic *subjectivity*.

Empiricism stresses the role of sense-experience in the constitution of knowledge, and rationalism the role of ideas. Little attention has been paid to the role of that further questioning by means of which the inquirer considers his or her own *grasp* of the nature of the object. This is the role of judgment. Judgment considers not the possible intelligibility to be found in the object of enquiry (its nature or form), but the extent to which it actually applies. More so than perception or understanding, judgment is clearly a matter of a certain *quality* of performance, a norm to be attained in an ever deeper way. To a question of this latter type, expressed not as What is it? but Is it so?, one can always answer that the evidence is not yet

²¹ A. Shutte, *Philosophy For Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1993) 9.

²² A fuller argument on the inadequacy of analytic philosophy to deliver the goods is presented in my discussion article, Patrick Giddy, "Philosophy for Africa — Another View," *Social Dynamics* 21 (University of Cape Town Centre for African Studies) 117-131.

sufficient to form a judgment. That itself is a judgment. In such a case, and when one does judge that the understanding mooted is indeed true, probably so or certainly, one commits oneself.

The variety of possible answers ... closes the door on possible excuses for mistakes. A judgment is the responsibility of the one that judges. It is a personal commitment.²³

And this leads to a consideration of what the content of such responsibility could be, of a possible norm or standard and its necessary elements. When one judges one is questioning the extent to which one's understanding covers the data. At the heart of knowing is the act of understanding, the insight that grasps the intelligibility in what is presented to the senses. But intelligence is not enough, for without attentiveness to the full range of data the theory will be biased. Furthermore, to pass judgment on what one does not understand is arrogant; while to understand but not to subject one's understanding to critical judgment is, as Lonergan says, "quite literally silly: it is only by judgment that there emerges a distinction between fact and fiction, logic and sophistry, philosophy and myth, history and legend, astronomy and astrology, chemistry and alchemy."²⁴ Human knowing consists then in the threefold process of experiencing, understanding, and judging. Insofar as one follows the norm of attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness, one is knowing.

Furthermore understanding objectivity in terms of a quality of performance leads to the further question of the extent to which one is conscious of and responsibly applying this norm. Under the exigence of rationality one stands back and interrogates one's own ideas. Similarly as responsible, one is able to consider the moral quality of one's commitments, to consent to or withhold consent from any particular desire according to one's judgment of its worth to guide one's course of action.

²³ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970) 272 = *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 297.

²⁴ Bernard Lonergan, "Cognitive Structure," *Collection*, ed. F.E. Crowe (New York: Herder, 1967) 223 = *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 206-207.

The implications of this are that any form of determinism is refuted: all the statements of the social sciences, for example, presuppose this normative structure, and implicitly affirm it to be true. Lonergan's term for the latter is 'self-transcendence,' and it has a cognitive and a moral dimension.

A proper understanding of statistical knowledge will afford a deeper insight into the nature of this fundamental norm of human living. Indeed given the existence and obvious success of statistical methods — in particular in the social sciences — in giving us new and more profound insights into the influences operating in our lives, an understanding of its nature *must* be an integral part of any account of human freedom and responsibility. It is not enough simply to restate, along with the classical tradition, that human beings by the law of their nature are rational and free. For this could be taken to exclude from consideration all the *questions* that arise when one considers the truths about human development, or the lack of it, found in the theories of Marx, Freud, and others.

Hugo Meynell observes among social scientists the tendency to give either a 'strong' interpretation, or else a 'weak' one, to the opinions of for example Marx and Freud.

According to the 'strong' interpretation, human intelligence and reason are more or less a mere reflex of other factors: the economic and social environment on the one hand, and impulses of an organic nature on the other.²⁵

In terms of the 'weak' interpretation on the other hand, human intelligence and reason, although strongly affected by such environmental factors, are not wholly determined by them. And clearly it is this latter interpretation that could accommodate objective moral values in the overall picture of human behavior.

Furthermore the 'strong' interpretation involves what can be termed a 'performative contradiction.' Meynell argues that "[a]ny account of human beings, from which it can be inferred that they are incapable of cognitive and moral self-transcendence, of getting to know what is true independently of their material and social milieu and acting in accordance with that knowledge, is self-destructive." On the 'strong' interpretation

²⁵ Hugo Meynell, *Freud, Marx and Morals* (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1981) 64.

"no-one, including Freud or Marx, thinks or writes as he does because there is good reason for him to do so." There would thus be no reason for a serious consideration of their writings.²⁶

And this difference is of crucial importance for the program of the African university, and for its ability to contribute to the quality of our lives in general. On the *strong* interpretation of Marxian theory (for example), truth and morality would be seen as entirely relative to class interests. There results that unreasonably constrained conception of 'standards of excellence' in academic scholarship, the 'standard empiricist' view argued by Maxwell to be detrimental to the interests of the university. On the 'weak' interpretation, however, group bias due to economic and social class is seen not to determine but significantly to *condition* what people believe and value.²⁷ In this case, a different view of academic excellence is implied. What is held as the standard is in the first place a self-understanding which results from a critical appropriation of one's inherited ideology. And encompassed within the same one standard is the norm of willingness to put into effect, as one can, those actions which are judged to be objectively the most worthwhile ones, which take into account the well-being not only of oneself and one's group but of people in general. The university can formulate its policy in a way which gives recognition to the goal of traditional African moral teaching, namely the objective development of the person. We can now turn to a more general framework for understanding the social sciences, consequent on the above analysis of human knowing, which will give develop the views on the African university expressed above.

²⁶ This is an example of the argument from retorsion (see also Meynell, *Freud* 12-15), which holds a central place in Lonergan's epistemology (for example, *Insight* 329 = CWL 3 353; *Method in Theology* 18). The argument — turning to the concerns of this paper — justifies the specific role of philosophy in the university. For a general discussion of the argument from retorsion, see S. Arndt, "Transcendental Method and Transcendental Arguments," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1987) 43-58.

²⁷ For a systematic list of 'strong' and 'weak' interpretations of Marxian theory, see Meynell, *Freud* 101-103.

5

The upshot of Lonergan's understanding of scientific explanation is that there can in the nature of things be real development, an emergence which is creative in the sense that it could not be predicted in advance from causal laws alone. And this gives an overriding vision to the scientific enterprise and to the academic culture in general. Lonergan's term for this vision of the process operative in the natural and human world is 'emergent probability.' Besides the laws which can be discovered in nature and social affairs, there is the statistical residue which is not simply left to be thought of as 'chance circumstances,' but is subject to probability analysis. But what is probable sooner or later occurs, given large enough numbers and sufficiently long time-periods. A higher level viewpoint can systematize what on the lower level remains only random. And this can be observed in nature: the higher cycle of animal life, for example, can only emerge if the lower cycles (plant life and chemical processes) are already operative. And to the extent that the laws explaining the lower levels are not fully determinative of what occurs, there is, at that lower level, real potential (determined by the probability fractions) for further development. As Lonergan writes:

There can be autonomous sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology, because on each earlier level of systematization there are statistical residues that constitute the merely coincidental manifolds to be systematized on the next level. It follows that higher laws and higher schemes of recurrence cannot be deduced from lower laws and lower schemes of recurrence, for the higher is engaged in regulating what the lower leaves as merely coincidental. Moreover, since there are statistical residues on every level, it follows that events on any given level cannot be deduced in systematic fashion from the combination of all the laws and all the schemes of recurrence of that and of all prior levels.²⁸

It is a commonplace that the 'laws' empirically established in the social sciences do not apply without remainder to human behavior. Much behavior seems to slip through the net of the conceptual apparatus built up by the social scientists. This would indicate that the data relevant to

²⁸ *Insight* 608 = CWL 3 631.

human behavior are intrinsically open to fuller, higher systematizations of the kind indicated in the quotation above. Human freedom and moral agency should not therefore be considered as epiphenomenal. At the same time the terms and relations posited on this higher level are not detached from the facts arrived at by social scientists.

However, as indicated by Meynell, these conclusions about the status of the findings of the social scientists are by no means universally accepted. For the contemporary mind-set there are two distinct but related obstacles to an easy affirmation of the resolution suggested in Lonergan. First there is the question of how we are to take the findings of the human sciences, the 'laws' of human behavior. Are they implausibly supposed to apply only to the body, leaving the mind free to take up the moral attitude? And an answer to this question is given in our admittedly very brief summary of Lonergan's understanding of how statistical science serves to complement the classical scientific method. Probability ratios identified at the level of psychology, for example, indicate a real potential for self-transcendence, the understanding of which is given through a higher systematization. Thus Freud identifies in the patient statistically significant correlations between conditions of human development (the need for some degree of awareness of one's own impulses, for example) and such things as sudden slips in speech and action, symptoms of physical disease, and so on. At the same time the analyst can bring into play what are properly speaking exigencies of a higher level, those pertaining to self-understanding and self-determination, and so get the patient to appropriate themselves more fully. The correlations reveal a non-random falling-short in the development of the person.²⁹

The second obstacle is that created by the 'myth' of the exclusive status to knowledge truly speaking that is claimed for the specific sciences. Metaphysical entities such as that of the 'person' are dismissed as epiphenomenal. But as argued above, to deny the reality of cognitive and moral self-transcendence is to fall into a performative contradiction. There is therefore good reason to accept the 'weak' rather than the 'strong'

²⁹ Meynell comments that it is "neither unusual, nor in my opinion quite inappropriate, to regard Freud's theories and therapeutic practice as a sustained application of Socrates's injunction, 'know yourself'" (Meynell, *Freud* 108).

interpretation of the findings of the social sciences. These latter factors although not determinative of human behavior are nevertheless either integrated into our understanding of ourselves or else operate in a seemingly random fashion to upset our well-laid plans.

This is the key to the insight into an understanding of our human reality and its constraints, and so of moral pronouncements, that is given in the development of statistical method and knowledge. For the human person can be understood by a variety of sciences, physical, chemical, biological, psychological. The essence of any living organism is development. And development proceeds not according to causal laws only, for causal laws interpret only one static stage of development; nor is the development in accordance with statistical law, for the changes that occur are not random but with a direction. Lonergan thus postulates a third method, genetic, appropriate to the study of living things.

In the case of human behavior this has important implications. The various sciences which each contribute to the understanding of the human person on one or other level, chemical, biological, psychological, can all be integrated into an understanding of the necessary structures of understanding and of self-determining. These structures, as we saw, are presupposed in any pronouncement of any scientist, or any claim to knowledge. They are also assumed by everyone when they make moral judgments, when they judge someone to be treating them 'unfairly,' for example. But how is such integration of empirical data and moral norm to be achieved? This question would seem to me to warrant detailed philosophical attention. To begin with one might consider how ethics was seen under the fascination of classical science alone: the human will operating autonomously of the deterministic laws of physical nature, and the intellect — supposed to be unaffected by those laws — guiding the will. But questions abound: How does the intellect effect a change in the will? How do these two 'faculties' interact? And is not the notion of the will arbitrarily choosing between good and evil, implausible?

A contemporary restatement of the classical view has it that

what one wills is a consequence of what one thinks about the good. ... Thoughts about what is good or desirable, while genuinely

matters of belief and cognition, have also a necessary effect on attitudes or volitions.³⁰

Simpson argues that the good is the proper object of the will, as 'the visible' is the natural object of the eye. But this begs the question raised by empirical analyses of widespread discrepancies between ideology and behavior given certain constant environmental factors. Moral relativism can be overcome only by providing a way of integrating such findings into a framework of critically justified values. In classical culture the standard of truth and goodness was thought to be a universal given, exemplified in the best man in the society, for example in Athens. But modern culture, to repeat, is characterized by a plurality of value systems. The notion of 'being human' can no longer be assumed in its normative sense. For the cluster of shared goods of the society that are entailed by such a notion would have to be properly justified. It is just this that is missing from restatements such as that of Simpson. In this respect they can be faulted in ways that would apply also to theories that knowledge of the absoluteness of the moral imperative can be given in a 'moral intuition.'³¹ Simpson speaks of a 'sense of the noble' as providing the necessary link between the reason and the will.³² But this is simply to

³⁰ P. Simpson, *Goodness and Nature* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1988) 43, 49.

³¹ In her important article "Modern Moral Philosophy" Elizabeth Anscombe addressed just this point, arguing that the term 'ought,' as used in categorical rather than hypothetical imperatives, has in modern ethics become a word of 'mere mesmeric force,' in W.D. Hudson (ed.), *The Is-Ought Question* (London: Methuen, 1970) 182.

³² According to MacIntyre the general foundational problem in moral philosophy is well illustrated in the case of Hutcheson. The inadequacies of the latter's notion of a foundational 'moral sense,' which is 'prior to all reasoning' (Alisdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* [London: Duckworth, 1988] 272), can also be applied to Simpson's case. (This is not to deny that there is much of worth in Simpson's book, in particular in his account of the inadequacies of the anti-naturalist arguments of Moore, Stevenson, and R.M. Hare.) In the Aristotelian tradition, MacIntyre argues, the ends desired were seen as rational, and justified by reference to the existing polity (with its consensus of ends) and to human nature. *Phronesis* referred to the basic human capacity to decide on practical matters by deliberating *within the framework of these reasonable ends*. But in Hutcheson *phronesis* turns into prudence, a faculty of non-moral calculating — "a cautious habit of consideration and forethought, discerning what may be advantageous or hurtful in life" (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?* 276), which to be moral must be informed by "a high sense of moral excellence." This amounts simply to the bald pronouncement that moral objectivity exists. As is Simpson, the ethics is implicitly dualist: 'caution' is always over against spontaneity of desire. There is no framework for the integration of new data

state that we do reach absolute value. Is it a 'part' of us that reaches such value? The whole idea of our capacity for moral objectivity needs to be spelled out and given proper philosophical justification in terms of the powers of cognitive and moral self-transcendence. In this way the results of empirical studies of the social formation of our self-understanding and of our commitments can amplify how we understand the good.

In Lonergan's account the will is seen simply as the human capacity, not to choose a course of action in a causal vacuum, but to relate oneself to oneself, and in this way to integrate the various influences, on the various levels — physical, biological, economic — codetermining one's condition. Such integration constitutes the essence of the appropriation of one's freedom. The moral imperative is understood not in terms of conforming to the moral law as opposed to following one's inclinations, but of self-knowledge and self-affirmation, and this is achieved through one's relation to others, as Hegel saw, and as is affirmed in traditional African thought, and, finally, as is confirmed in multiple ways in the findings of the social sciences.

What is random (or rather 'chance') from the point of view of classical science can, in modern science, be seen to be subject to a norm from which particular events will not diverge systematically. This enables the scientist to predict a certain verified trend to the subject investigated. Such methods therefore affirm a dynamic structure to reality and so can encompass our human, self-developing, reality too. Indeed they are an expression of our ability to grasp the nature of things and so re-act on the world, thus altering the conditions for our further development. The genius of statistical science lies in its ability to give an account of regularities which pertain to our experienced reality. It is thus able to capture the nature of the social forces which come into play in the subject's decision process, whether consciously or not. In this way our knowledge of human flourishing, traditionally grounding judgments of moral value, may be amplified in important ways.

about how we grow in self-understanding and in the quality of our self-affirmation (and thus no real understanding of a virtue such as *prudentia*, according to MacIntyre). Against theories such as this social scientists are bound to protest, as for example does Karen Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* (New York: The Norton Library, 1950) 13-16.

Further elaboration of this point is in order. One's development may be initiated on the organic level, as with the transition from baby to toddler to child, and as biological needs call for the construction of housing and systems of food production; or the psychic, as when one is stimulated to reconsider one's urban life-style after the experience of the quiet of a week in the country; or the intellectual, when one conceives first of a problem in present modes of living and employs one's intelligence to find an solution. Whatever the case, unless there is a corresponding adjustment on the other levels, one's attempt to strike out anew is bound to remain merely a flash in the pan. For example, to the pressure of material necessity one may make adjustments in one's behavior, at best, as Lonergan says, tolerated by the inner subject. Again, the demands of the organism are registered by neural signals, "but the signals need an interpreter and the interpreter an intelligent and willing pupil."³³ Finally, an excellent resolution can be frustrated because one's imagination is full of schemes of living that allow scant place for such an ideal and one lives then not a new but only a dual life.

To the problem of human development there is no facile solution in the intellectual level integrating the psychic, and the psychic the organic. For one cannot say the pure spirit of enquiry, the ineradicable and pure desire to understand that is the clue to the whole thesis of *Insight*, is the true 'I' while the sensitive psyche is an 'It' on which one may operate as an object. "Both are I and neither is merely It. If my intelligence is mine, so is my sexuality. If my reasonableness is mine, so are my dreams."³⁴

There arises then "the necessity of avoiding conflict between the unconscious and the conscious components of a development." This necessity can be formulated by means of the term, genuineness. To adopt genuineness as a norm is to acknowledge in one's development the tension between transcendence and the limitations of that transcendence due to the existence of relatively autonomous schemes of recurrence compounding the human self. To fail to acknowledge this tension is to block any further sustainable development.

³³ *Insight* 472 = CWL 3 497.

³⁴ *Insight* 474 = CWL 3 499.

Each autonomous science helps in our understanding of the constraints of human development. Our experience of particular times and situations contributes, in a way that was neglected in the classical approach, to our knowledge of human nature. But the empirical sciences need to be coordinated. And Lonergan's analysis, through its critique of the naive and popular — but mistaken — view of objectivity, achieves this. Objectivity is reached not through eliminating as far as possible our subjective interpretation but through the thorough employment of our attentiveness, understanding, and judgment. As we learn more about the various factors — not rigid laws but real trends — operating in our own lives and the lives of others, we deepen our understanding of the biases, or likely biases, obstructing the free operation of our spontaneous drive to understand and know, and undermining our native willingness to do what we understand to be the right thing.³⁵ An integration of the moral objectivity associated with traditional African culture, as well as with the classical philosophical tradition, and the principles of the human sciences, which in part define the nature of the modern university, has in principle here been achieved.

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³⁵ The whole question of *effective* freedom as opposed to *essential* freedom is a theme of Meynell; it is well brought out with reference to the urge to idealism among seminarians in a recent article by psychotherapist Peter Galloway ("Spiritual Healing through Psychotherapy," *Grace and Truth* 12 [1995] 47-53). Galloway refers to the classical text on the gap between essential and effective freedom to dispose of oneself in terms of one's ideals, the story of the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-22.

CONCUPISCENCE AND BENEVOLENCE IN THE THOMISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY OF MARITAIN, LONERGAN, AND RAHNER

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THIS ESSAY EXPLORES the epistemological and related ethical problem of the relation between concupiscence and benevolence in the Thomistic understanding of intellectual desire. On the one hand, Thomistic epistemology conceives intellectual desire to be an acquisitive, concupiscent drive for the self-perfection of the knower, a drive which is apparently unconcerned with the ipseity of being. On the other hand — in what seems to be a contradictory manner — Thomists simultaneously take intellectual desire to be a benevolent drive to acknowledge and know being in its otherness.

My exploration of this tension pursues the following course of analysis. First, I show briefly how the dualistic understanding of intellectual desire in Thomism is shared with other philosophical traditions and is a significant, perennial problem to be found in ancient and medieval philosophy, as well as in the contemporary philosophical and cultural debate between postmodernism and modernism. Second, I show how this problem of intellectual desire arises specifically within the texts of Thomistic thinkers. Third, in order to reconcile the two views of intellectual desire, I examine at length how, in contrasting ways, the dualistic notion of intellectual desire underlies and is overcome in the epistemology of three modern Thomistic thinkers: namely, Jacques Maritain, Bernard Lonergan, and Karl Rahner. Finally, I suggest that these various solutions to the problem, though divergent, indicate a consensus among these three Thomists about the importance of love in the act of knowledge, and show

how Thomists can deal explicitly with the problem of intellectual desire which is shared by many other traditions and is particularly relevant in contemporary thought, ethics, and culture.

THE PROBLEM OF INTELLECTUAL DESIRE

While, especially in modern philosophy, one more naturally associates desire with the somatic and emotive side of human nature, my interest in this essay lies rather in the desire which belongs to the intellect itself. Moreover, by intellect I do not mean the moral desiderative reason (*nous orektike*) or rational desire (*orexis dianoetike*) of the Aristotelian practical intellect (*nous praktike*), whose end is moral virtue and moral situational truth, but the theoretical or contemplative intellect (*nous theoretike*) which specifically desires theoretical truth as its end and good (see books 6 and 10 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* for this distinction). In the history of philosophy, one finds numerous and diverse concepts of contemplative, intellectual desire or love, some of which, especially those belonging to the classical sources, have influenced the Thomistic tradition: for example, Aristotle's concept of a natural desire (*orexis*) to know;¹ Plato's understanding of a unique type of love (*eros*), desire (*epithumia*), or friendship (*philia*) which belongs to reason;² Plotinus's idea of an intellect intoxicated with love (*nous eron*);³ Augustine's position that ultimately "the only way to truth is through love [*charitatem*]";⁴ Pascal's similar claim that "divine wisdom teaches us that, in regard to spiritual things, we must 'love in order to know them'";⁵ Spinoza's notion of 'the highest stage of

¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941) 980a. All further citations of Aristotle's texts are from this edition.

² Plato, "Symposium," in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971) 199dff. Unless otherwise indicated, all further citations of Plato's texts are from this edition. See also Drew A. Hyland, "Eros, Epithumia, and Philia in Plato," *Phronesis* 13 (1968) 32-46.

³ Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. G. Lewis (Paris: Desclee De Brouwer, 1959) VI, 7 [38] 35.

⁴ Augustine, "Reply to Faustus the Manichean," in *The Works of Aurelius Augustine*, ed. Marcus Dods, vol. 5: *Writings in Connection with the Manichean Heresy*, trans. Richard Stothert (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1847) 545.

⁵ Blaise Pascal, "On the Art of Persuasion," in *The Miscellaneous Writings of Pascal*, trans. M.P. Faugere (London: Longman, 1849) 150.

knowledge' as the 'intellectual love of God' (*amor Dei intellectualis*);⁶ the position of the 'romantic' young Hegel that the alienated dichotomizing of reason needs to be lifted up and completed by love and friendship;⁷ Scheler's idea (influenced by Augustine) that the intentionality of knowledge intrinsically involves the knower 'taking an interest' in the object known;⁸ and Heidegger's notion of thinking as a mode of 'care' for being (as a 'shepherd of being'), a notion which was heavily influenced by Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Scheler.⁹

Similarly, Thomas speaks of a desire which belongs specifically to the contemplative intellect. Thus he writes that "the natural desire [*naturale desiderium*] of a rational creature is to know everything that belongs to the perfection of the intellect, namely, the species and genera of things and their essences."¹⁰ Although he distinguishes between the intellectual and volitional faculties of the soul, Thomas nonetheless maintains that "each power of the soul [including, therefore, the intellect] is a form or nature, and has a natural inclination to something. Hence each power desires, by natural appetite, that object which is suitable to itself."¹¹ He refers to the

⁶ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. James Gutman (New York: Hafner Press, 1949) 273ff.

⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate," in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T.M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948) 215, 247.

⁸ Max Scheler, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," in *Liebe und Erkenntnis*, 2nd ed. (Bern and Munich: Francke Verlag, 1970), 24-26. This essay provides an extensive discussion of the relation of love and knowledge in Augustine, Pascal, and other figures.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1962) 235ff.; "Letter on Humanism," in Martin Heidegger: *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) 210. For a discussion of Heidegger's notion that, as 'care,' thinking is a kind of 'love,' see Bernard J. Boelen, "The Question of Ethics in the Thought of Martin Heidegger," in *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth*, ed. Manfred S. Frings (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968) 99-103. For the historical influences on Heidegger's notion of 'care,' see John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Indiana University Press, 1994) ch. 8, 10.

¹⁰ "Quod naturale desiderium rationalis creaturae est ad sciendum omnis illa quae pertinent ad perfectionem intellectus: et haec sunt species et genera rerum, et rationes earum." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (Leonine Edition) I, q. 12, a. 8, ad 4; trans. Anton C. Pegis in *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Modern Library, 1948) 87.

¹¹ "Sed quaelibet potentia animae appetit quoddam particulare appetibile, scilicet objectum sibi conveniens." *Summa theologiae* I, q. 80, a. 1, ad 3; *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*, 352.

intellect's desire as both a natural desire, *naturale desiderium*, and an appetite, *appetitus*.¹² According to its common medieval usage in Thomas, the term *appetitus* is not associated primarily with the bodily appetites, as it is in modern terminology, but rather signifies in general the tendency of a being or a nature toward its final end. Moreover, in Thomas's thought, *appetitus* is used analogically in regard to the different faculties of a human being, so as to express the proper perfection belonging to the distinctive operation or activity of each of these faculties.¹³ For example, while the nutritive faculty of the soul is said to satisfy its appetite through the acquisition of food, the intellect is said to fulfill its appetite through the attainment of truth, and so on.

My study of intellectual desire in Thomistic epistemology does not deal primarily with this topic of the analogical meaning of intellectual desire, as it is pursued, for example, by Pierre Rousselot.¹⁴ There is little to add to existing discussions of this topic, since Thomists now generally take the analogical nature of intellectual desire in Thomas to be a given. Rather, I am addressing a different and new topic which lies in the tension, as I shall show, between concupiscence and benevolence in the Thomistic notion of intellectual appetite. How can one reconcile these two seemingly opposed views of intellectual appetite, namely, a concupiscent notion which portrays the intellect as ultimately self-interested, desiring to attain knowledge of being in order to perfect or realize itself, and conversely a benevolent notion of desire which shows that the intellect has as its ultimate end the love of being as a value in itself? Of course, the terms 'concupiscence' and 'benevolence' do not strictly belong to the technical language of Thomistic epistemology, but they are useful, descriptive terms that conveniently indicate the two basic tendencies of intellectual desire in Thomism.

¹² *Summa theologiae* I, q. 12, a. 8, ad 4; I, q. 80, a. 1. For a full account of the terms *naturale desiderium* and *appetitus* in Thomas, see William R. O'Connor, *The Eternal Quest: The Teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Natural Desire for God* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947).

¹³ *Summa theologiae* I, q. 80, a. 1, ad 3; see also Pierre Rousselot, S.J., *The Intellectualism of St. Thomas*, trans. James E. O'Mahoney (London: Sheed and Ward, 1935) 26ff.

¹⁴ See Rousselot, *The Intellectualism of St. Thomas*.

This dualistic understanding of intellectual desire is not confined to Thomism, but is found throughout the history of the concept of intellectual desire from Plato to Heidegger which was outlined above. In Plato, we find on the one hand that he considers wisdom to be the love of being and a 'friendship' with the divine (*theophilia*) which is radically different from the 'appetites for food, drink, sex,' and other bodily pleasures in the lowest appetitive part of the soul, as well as from the equally hedonistic pursuit of the pleasures of 'power, victory, and honor' in the spirited part of the soul and in the subjectivism of the Sophists.¹⁵ On the other hand, Plato also uses surprisingly similar 'hedonistic' and possessive language to speak of intellectual desire. 'True being' is described as 'the proper food' which the intellect 'feasts' upon, such that, in being 'filled with being' and assimilating it, the intellect attains possession (*hexis*) of it and the 'true pleasure' (*hedone alethei*) it provides.¹⁶ One finds a similar tension in Aristotle. On the one hand, in a way which denotes the intellect's selfless interest in being as other, theoretical wisdom is said to be a knowledge 'pursued for its own sake,' which begins in 'wondering that things are as they are,' and which, because it is 'divine,' is 'useless' to the practical 'interests' of the individual knower.¹⁷ On the other hand, intellectual desire is also the highest state of possessive having (*hexis*) and perfection (*entelecheia*) for the soul, the highest kind of 'pleasure' and 'happiness,' 'surpassing everything' in 'power and worth.'¹⁸

The Christian thinkers of the medieval period also have a dualistic conception of intellectual desire, and like Plato and Aristotle they tend to emphasize the benevolent, as opposed to the concupiscent, side of intellectual desire. Augustine, for example, considers that all intellectual affirmations of truth must be accompanied by a fundamental conversion (*conversio*) of the will toward God as the ultimate good in itself; without this conversion toward benevolence, the will remains selfish and thus

¹⁵ *Symposium* 212a; *Gorgias* passim; *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979) 580d-581b.

¹⁶ *Phaedrus* 247-248; *Protagoras* 313; *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, 585-86.

¹⁷ *Metaphysics* 982a30, 982a15; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1141a29-1141b10.

¹⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177a25-30, 1178a.

interferes with the search for truth.¹⁹ In Augustine's philosophy, the possessive, objective grasp of truth is never isolated from an evaluative, self-transcending assent of the will. For Augustine, contemplation is itself already an ethical activity which benevolently acknowledges the transcendent value of being. Likewise, although Thomas speaks of the intellectual act as the fulfillment of the mind's concupiscent appetite for truth, he describes the intellect's final perfection not merely as a possessive objective knowledge of the absolute but rather as a knowledge which comes from a sharing in the divine life which is the result of God's gift of grace.²⁰ For Thomas, the intellect's natural, possessive conceptual union with being is ultimately surpassed by a supernatural, benevolent communion with God.

By contrast with the ancient Greek and Christian medieval understanding of contemplation, the modern turn toward subjectivity stresses the concupiscent side of intellectual desire, and essentially neutralizes the ancient and medieval sense of the transcendent status and value of being. According to Maritain, much of modern epistemology no longer understands the 'object' of human knowledge to be the Greek *hypokeimenon* or medieval *subjectum* in the sense of an underlying reality, but rather now sees it 'as pure object,' that is, literally as an object or representation of being entirely relative to thought, which is "cut off in itself from any 'thing' in which it has existence in which it has existence ... independent of [one's] *cogito*."²¹ Modern epistemology excludes, from the realm of the knowable, being as a 'transobjective subject' which is not simply relative to thought, but rather is irreducibly other to thought, insofar as the subject is in itself an inexhaustible wellspring of intelligibility. According to

¹⁹ Augustine, *On Music* VI, 5, 12-13, in *The Essential Augustine*, ed. Vernon J. Bourke (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978) 46.

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, ch. LII-LIII. As John D. Caputo writes of Thomas's intellectualism, "the truth of intellectus is unitative not representational, experiential not objective. God is not an object grasped at a distance but a presence which envelops the soul." John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982) 267.

²¹ Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Scribner, 1959) 91. For similar views, see Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960) 236ff and Joseph Marechal, S.J., *Marechal Reader*, trans. and ed. by Joseph Donceel, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 47-49.

Maritain, being exists 'for itself' and as an end in itself.²² Hence, in much of modern epistemology, being is no longer the transcendent end of Aristotelian wonder or Augustinian love, but merely an object for thought which is to be 'conquered' by the mind's subjective system of categories and concepts. Modern thought and culture tend generally to regard the human intellect to be the 'master of nature,' effectively subjugating being to values which have been relegated entirely to the side of the human knower, as in the case of Nietzsche's notion of value as an expression of human 'will to power.'²³

Not only Thomists such as Maritain, but also a number of twentieth-century existential-phenomenological and 'postmodern' thinkers, who have radically criticized modern humanism and its subjectivistic metaphysics, have observed in their own terms how modern epistemology signifies the 'concupiscence' and 'acquisitiveness' of the mind gone awry. And in appealing to postmodern thinkers, though without discussing the real problems with their thought,²⁴ I am following a recent trend in Catholic philosophy to draw upon the theme of 'alterity' or 'difference' in such postmodern authors as Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida in order to argue for the continued significance of the medieval notion of the transcendent otherness of being and ultimately God in Thomas and negative theology.²⁵ For Martin Heidegger, the modern, humanistic

²² Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* 93; *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantiere and Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1948) 14.

²³ Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason* (New York: Scribner, 1952) 90.

²⁴ For a critique of postmodern thinkers which fails, however, to see also their positive significance for Thomistic thought, see Alisdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

²⁵ See Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas; Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) ch. 10, "Openness to the Mystery"; "The Good News About Alterity: Derrida and Theology," *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (1993) 453-70; Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For other discussions of Thomism and postmodernism, see Gregory M. Reichberg, "Contextualizing Theoretical Reason: Thomas Aquinas and Postmodern Thought," *Aquinas: Rivista Internazionale di Filosofia* 38 (1995) 249-72; James L. Marsh, "Post-Modernism: A Lonerganian Retrieval and Critique," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 35 (1995) 159-73; Ronald H. McKinney, "Deconstructing Lonergan," *International Philosophical Quarterly*

'metaphysics of subjectivity' is tragically caught in the tension between its inauthentic view of consciousness as 'the tyrant of Being' (a view which completes itself in contemporary technology) and its possible redeeming view of humanity as 'the shepherd of Being.'²⁶ Similar to Heidegger, Edmund Husserl and Jean-Paul Sartre have argued that in losing sight of the 'intentionality' of consciousness (a concept originally articulated by medieval thinkers and transmitted to Husserl through the Catholic philosopher Franz Brentano²⁷), moderns tend to portray the mind as a kind of second 'stomach' which consumes and dissolves transcendent intentional objects into completely interior sense data and ideas of consciousness.²⁸ Likewise, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida contrast thought's 'ethical' attitude of 'welcoming the Other' and 'justice' toward the Other with the especially pernicious 'violence' of modern subjectivism which reduces all otherness to a mode of the self, as in the case of Hegel's notion of absolute spirit.²⁹

Though there are fundamental disagreements involved, the neo-Thomistic critique of modern humanism fits in with the general trend of this critique of modern thought and culture by postmodern thinkers. Consider Maritain's censure of secular humanism,³⁰ as well as Josef Pieper's and Yves R. Simon's admonishment to our 'work-oriented,' technological society that it return to the ancient ideal of contemplation as

31 (1991): 81-93; James L. Marsh, "Reply to McKinney on Lonergan: A Deconstruction," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 31 (1991) 95-104; J.A. DiNoia, "American Catholic Theology at Century's End: Postconciliar, Post-modern, and Post-Thomistic," *The Thomist* 54 (1990) 499-518; Thomas S. Hibbs, "MacIntyre's Postmodern Thomism: Reflections on Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry," *The Thomist* 57 (1993): 277-97.

²⁶ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" 210.

²⁷ See Herbert Spiegelberg, "The Concept of Intentionality in Scholasticism, Brentano, and Husserl," in *The Context of the Phenomenological Movement* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981) 3-26.

²⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology," trans. Joseph P. Fell, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 1 (1970) 4-5.

²⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'," in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

³⁰ Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938).

leisure and worship.³¹ In addition, the neo-Thomists bring to this contemporary discussion the premodern understanding of the mind as a journey toward truth that is ultimately to be completed in loving relationship with God, which is not found in most modern thinkers. Given that we can sort out within the Thomistic account of intellectual desire the relation between a 'concupiscent' and a 'benevolent' moment, there is room within Thomistic epistemology to resolve in its own terms the problem which was outlined above in the contemporary debate between modernism and postmodernism, as well as in the debate between Plato and the Sophists. In essence, the problem we address in the Thomistic account of intellectual desire can be viewed as a microcosm of a wider, perennial problem in the history of philosophy, and one which is especially relevant in contemporary thought and culture.

THE TENSION BETWEEN BENEVOLENCE AND CONCUPISCENCE IN THOMISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY

Thomists generally describe the finality or teleology of the intellect in terms of its acquisitive drive for self-fulfillment. The intellect is thought to be a potency which is actualized and perfected insofar as it comes to possess its object noetically. In this sense, Rousselot sees the intellect as primarily 'possessive of reality,'³² and Lonergan refers to it as an 'eros' for being.³³ Similarly, Marechal describes the finality of the intellect as "an immanent action through which the subject acquires and assimilates new determinations."³⁴ The intellect acquires a determination of being when it produces its own mental word (*verbum mentis*) or concept of some universal essence, for example, that human beings are rational animals. The concept is a mental similitude of an extramental reality which enables the intellect effectively to become other than itself, or, as Gilson expresses it,

³¹ Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. A. Dru (New York: Pantheon, 1964), and Yves R. Simon, *Work, Society and Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986).

³² Rousselot, *The Intellectualism of St. Thomas* 51.

³³ Bernard Lonergan, S.J., "The Natural Knowledge of God," in *A Second Collection*, eds. William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974) 130.

³⁴ *Marechal Reader* 180, see also 187.

to "seize within the self a non-self."³⁵ Pieper maintains that, by virtue of its power to assimilate its object by means of the mental similitude, the intellect is in fact the acquisitive power *par excellence* or the 'highest mode of having.'³⁶ Thomas himself sees knowledge, understood as the acquisition or assimilation of truth, to be the intellect's primary aim. "The intellect's perfection and dignity consist in having whatever is understood within the intellect itself because thus does it actually know, which is the basis of its dignity."³⁷

In these descriptions of intellectual desire, the intellect seeks to grasp the content of knowledge primarily for the sake of expanding itself in being without any apparent regard for the ipseity or transcendent value of being itself. Gilson describes the attainment of knowledge in virtually egoistic and mechanistic terms: "our intellect is constructed for *extracting* the intelligible from the sensible."³⁸ "To say that the knowing subject becomes the object known is equivalent, therefore, to saying that the form of the knowing subject is increased by the form of the object known."³⁹ Maritain likewise states that concepts perfect the human knower by enriching this knower ontologically or 'entitatively.'⁴⁰ He describes being as the 'food' upon which the intellect lives.⁴¹ Seeing the finality of the intellect to be a drive to subordinate being to itself, he writes that "in the created realm Reason confronts Being and labors to conquer it."⁴²

³⁵ Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Edward Bullough (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1929) 255.

³⁶ Josef Pieper, S.J., *Happiness and Contemplation*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Pantheon, 1958) 64. See also Rousselot, *The Intellectualism of St. Thomas* 28.

³⁷ "Perfectio autem et dignitas intellectus in hoc consistit quod species rei intellectae in ipso consistit intellectu; cum secundum hoc intelligat actu, in quo eius dignitas tota consideratur." Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate* q. 22, a. 11, c.; trans. Mary T. Clark in *An Aquinas Reader* (New York: Doubleday, 1972) 258.

³⁸ *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* 255 (emphasis mine).

³⁹ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L.K. Shook (New York: Random House, 1956) 255. See also Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* 228; Yves R. Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge*, trans. Vukan Kuic and Richard J. Thompson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990) 13.

⁴⁰ Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* 117.

⁴¹ Maritain, *The Range of Reason* 87; *A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948) 4.

⁴² Maritain, *The Range of Reason* 87.

However, in tension with this acquisitive orientation of the mind, Thomistic thinkers also wish to maintain that knowledge comes to actualization and perfection precisely inasmuch as the intellect acknowledges being in its transsubjective otherness. Gilson writes that "every cognition of an object other than ourselves is a real relationship between our own being and another being." He claims that the intellect's union with being reaches not simply the essence but the existential reality of another; "the intellect cannot attain being without, by the same token, attaining the act that lies in it beyond essence. The human intellect thus reaches, even in its most natural operations, a layer of being more deeply seated than essences."⁴³ For example, grasping the essence of human nature is not simply a matter of the intellect's acquiring a new determination of being, but rather is based upon the intellect reaching out to reality in its transcendent value or ipseity. Maritain refers to the intentional *species* or the mental similitude as "a wholly immaterial and supersubjective union in virtue of which one becomes the other intentionally."⁴⁴ He explains that the intentional *species* is not simply an ontological perfection of the intellect, but also serves to mediate the human knower with another being in its own 'inexhaustible' act of existence. "In the act of understanding," he writes, "the intellect becomes what is other than itself, precisely as such. It introduces into itself an inexhaustible (transobjective) reality vitally apprehended as its object."⁴⁵ For Maritain, the intellect aims at being not as 'object' (that is, as something merely re-presented by the mind), but rather in its otherness as 'subject' (that is, as something underlying our perception and thus existing in itself). "What a science tends to know is a determinate subject in its existential inexhaustibility."⁴⁶

Simon conceives this tendency of the intellect toward the other-as-subject to be the intellect's "friendship for the [content] of knowledge."⁴⁷ The *species* or ideas of the mind does not exist primarily to perfect the

⁴³ Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* 238, 232.

⁴⁴ Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge* 117.

⁴⁵ Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics* 4; see also *Existence and the Existent* 11.

⁴⁶ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 14.

⁴⁷ Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge* 20.

human knower ontologically, but primarily for the sake of mediating or communicating the other as other. Simon writes,

The primary function of an idea is to represent something other than itself. The idea always makes present to the mind something other that exists first of all for its own sake, and if the idea also has an existence of its own, this is only because it needs such existence in order to exercise its representational, intentional function.⁴⁸

Simon admonishes the philosopher to practice a 'scientific asceticism' which requires the intellect "to transcend the subjectivity of thought in order to achieve its perfection."⁴⁹ The intellect's drive to enrich its being ought to be subordinated to a desire to exist for the sake of another. It must set aside its concupiscence and, as Simon says, "seek the truth in charity."⁵⁰ Similarly, Thomas compares the intellect informed by knowledge to a lover who acts, not for himself or herself, but in accordance with the being of the beloved:

Whence just as the intellect formed though the quiddities of things is directed by this in its awareness of principles that are apprehended by known definitions and, further, in the apprehension of conclusions that are made known from principles, so the one loving whose affection is informed by the good itself ... is inclined through love to act according to the exigency of the beloved.⁵¹

But Simon's account of intellectual asceticism only underscores the problem of the apparently paradoxical nature of intellectual desire which is found in Thomistic epistemology. He sees clearly that the benevolence of the intellect is opposed to the intellect's desire to realize itself though the noetic acquisition of being. On the other hand, the intellect has a natural need and desire to possess being for the intellect's own sake and

⁴⁸ Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge* 18-19.

⁴⁹ Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge* 21.

⁵⁰ Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge* 21.

⁵¹ "Unde sicut intellectus formatus per quidditates rerum ex hoc dirigitur in cognitione principiorum quae scitis terminis cognoscuntur, et ulterius, in cognitionibus, conclusionum quae notae fiunt ex principiis; ita amans cujus affectus est informatus ipso bono ... inclinatur per amorem ad operandum secundum exigentiam amati." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Sentences* III, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1.14; Clark, *An Aquinas Reader* 261.

yet, on the other hand, it is required to give up this desire so as to be for the sake of the other. The intellect, driven simultaneously in two directions and being thus at odds with itself, must strive "by dint of an heroic effort" to "surmount its natural bent"⁵²:

Our created intelligence cannot not desire the subjective qualification and enrichment that ideas bring to it. ... But as soon as the mind goes after the ideas themselves, instead of the object, the ideas conceal the object by taking its place. ... To grasp this object of knowledge, our thought must die to itself, just as love must overcome selfishness, in the other [*i.e.*, in the act of knowledge] we transcend subjectivity.⁵³

In order to overcome this divisiveness in its account of intellectual desire, Thomistic epistemology needs to show rather how benevolence and concupiscence work together as an integrated whole in the fulfillment of the act of knowledge. Simon himself tends to emphasize the opposition within intellectual desire without clearly reconciling the sides of benevolence and concupiscence. To this end, the remainder of this essay considers how different syntheses of concupiscence and benevolence can be found in the epistemology of three Thomistic thinkers: Maritain, who represents a so-called traditionally 'realist' version of this synthesis; Lonergan, who shows this synthesis within a so-called 'transcendental' approach; and Rahner, also a 'transcendental' Thomist, who offers a quasi-Hegelian dialectical synthesis.⁵⁴ Although none of these thinkers explicitly refers to intellectual desire in terms of a relation of

⁵² Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge* 45.

⁵³ Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge* 20.

⁵⁴ In using this common terminological distinction between 'realist' and 'transcendental' Thomists, I do not mean to suggest that Lonergan and Rahner are not realists on the level of the content of knowledge. I intend the distinction between 'realist' and 'transcendental' to refer not to this content (which for all three thinkers cited is certainly an extramental reality, such that they are all both 'traditional' and 'realist'), but rather to the difference regarding the method by which the mind is thought to attain this content, namely, the difference between an exterior approach *via* sensory experience of the world (the traditional 'realist' approach of Thomas) and an interior approach *via* reflection on human consciousness, which, though reminiscent of Augustine, is primarily rooted in the modern transcendental philosophy of such thinkers as Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger.

concupiscence and benevolence, I nonetheless show how the dynamics of this relation is at work in their respective analyses of the act of knowing.

THE BENEVOLENCE OF THE JUDGMENT (MARITAIN)

For Maritain, the mental possession of being in a concept does not signify the highest perfection of human knowledge. Rather, it is *judgment* which is "the completion, the consummation, the perfection and the glory of the intellect and of intellection, just as the existence it affirms is the glory and perfection of being and of intelligibility."⁵⁵ In a concept, the intellect attains being only insofar as it separates the intelligible content (that is, the essence) of particular things from the subjective act of this particular thing in which the intelligible content exists. For example, the essence of human being is separated mentally from the given individual, 'John,' who as an extramental subject constitutes an inviolate unity of individuality and universality. As Maritain explains:

In abstractive perception, what the intellect lays hold of is the natures or essences which are in existent things or subjects ... [and] which themselves are not things, and which intellect strips of existence by immaterializing them.⁵⁶

In the judgment, however, the intellect affirms that unity of essence and existence in particular beings which it originally separated. Through the judgment, therefore, the intellect reaches beyond its own realm of *noesis* and recognizes being in its otherness. Thus, in asserting that 'John is a human being,' the mind effectively restores the essence to its existential ground and affirms this concrete unity of essence and existence. "[Judgment] consists in transposing the mind from the plane of simple essence, of simple object presented to thought, to the plane of the thing, of the subject possessing existence."⁵⁷

Moreover, through judgments, Maritain explains, the intellect comes to know the act of existence analogously as a perfection which is related in

⁵⁵ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 16.

⁵⁶ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 15.

⁵⁷ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 17; see also Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* 42.

a unique manner to the essence in question (for example, to human being as an existent act).⁵⁸ Existence therefore is an 'object' for the intellect in a special sense, that is, precisely inasmuch as it does not lend itself to a univocal concept. Thus, in the judgment, the mind "*objectis[es] a trans-objective act*" of existence.⁵⁹ We grasp this act of existence in a 'privileged idea' whose intelligibility is not merely the circumscribable content of an essence, which the mind can possess, but "the eminent intelligibility of the super-intelligibility which the act of judging deals with (that of existence)."⁶⁰

The necessity of the intellect to affirm extramental and analogous existence means that intellectual desire cannot be satisfied simply on the level of its acquisitive drive to possess being conceptually. "Judgment," writes Maritain, "is not content with the representation or apprehension of existence. It affirms existence, it projects into it, as effected or effectible outside the mind, the objects of concept apprehended by the mind."⁶¹ Judgment brings thought into relation with being as 'subject,' which cannot be fully grasped and possessed conceptually as an 'object' (representation). The content of the judgment is the transobjective content of being, namely, the existent subject itself which "lies outside the order of simple representation" and "cannot be the object of a perfect abstraction."⁶²

According to Maritain, it is rather the awareness and affirmation of a 'trans-objective object' — and not the knowledge of essences — which is the intellect's higher aim. This transobjective, and hence, non-possessive awareness of being presents being to us not merely as a means for the mind's self-realization, but "for its own sake, in the values and resources appertaining to its own intelligibility and reality."⁶³ For Maritain, the intellect is related to being not simply as an object which lacks intrinsic value in itself, but as an underlying subject which is the effective fount of

⁵⁸ Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* 213.

⁵⁹ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 24 (emphasis mine).

⁶⁰ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 23; see also *The Degrees of Knowledge* 211-212.

⁶¹ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 17.

⁶² Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 17, 24; see also *The Degrees of Knowledge* 213.

⁶³ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 20.

value. Hence, the intellect's 'transobjective insight' into the act of existence "overflows ... in transcendental values and in dynamic values of propensity through which the idea of being transgresses itself."⁶⁴ For Maritain, the intellect should be primarily concerned not with acquiring or capturing being, but with recognizing and affirming that being has, in effect, first captured it. The philosopher, he writes, "owes both bewilderment and joy to the fact that he remains enraptured with being."⁶⁵ In effect, Maritain's account of knowledge affirms that intellectual desire tends primarily toward a benevolent relation with being as other:

When a man has the obscure intuition of subjectivity, the reality, whose sudden invasion of his consciousness he experiences, is that of a secret totality, which contains both itself and its upsurge, and which superabounds in knowledge and love. Only by love does it attain to its supreme level of existence — existence as self-giving.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, although the benevolence of the judgment transcends the simple representational knowledge of the concept, the intellect's recognition of the other-as-subject always takes place in relation to the finite content of human cognition (a conceptualized essence). The acquisitive drive of intellect is not opposed to but works in tandem with the intellect's higher, analogous knowledge of being. There is thus a cooperative relation between concupiscence and benevolence implicit in Maritain's analysis of the act of judgment. While the actualization of our knowledge of the object is perfected in a reference back to its transobjective and existential origin, this reference back to the act of existence is itself in turn related to and made possible by our noetic, representational grasp of the essence.

⁶⁴ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 20, see also 72-73.

⁶⁵ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 22.

⁶⁶ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* 82-83.

THE UNRESTRICTED DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE (LONERGAN)

In Lonergan, the benevolence of the intellect can be found in 'the act of questioning,' which he also calls 'the pure desire to know.'⁶⁷ By questioning, Lonergan does not simply mean the mind's desire to know particular essences, such as the essence of human nature, but rather the mind's radical orientation to the infinite content of universal being. The desire of the intellect does not cease in its knowledge of an essence, but ever seeks to transcend any finite, essential determination of being through an open-ended capacity to question. While "other concepts are merely essences and prescind from existence or actuality," "the notion of being does not rest on the grasp of what from some viewpoint is essential." Rather, it "remains incomplete on the level of intelligence; it moves conception forward to questions for reflection; it moves beyond single judgments to the totality of correct judgments; and so it does not prescind from existence and actuality."⁶⁸ The pure desire to know stands in fact prior to any concept or judgment, indeed prior to all objective cognition, since it is our original, unrestricted quest for knowledge. "Prior to conception and to judgment, there is the dynamic orientation of intelligent and rational consciousness with its unrestricted objective. This orientation is man's capacity to raise questions and thereby to generate knowledge."⁶⁹ For Lonergan, questioning is, as it were, the light-switch of the human intellect and the unrestricted interest in being which characterizes "the wonder Aristotle described as the beginning of all science and philosophy."⁷⁰

Lonergan calls intellectual desire 'pure' because it is essentially free from the subjective self-interest which belongs to the bodily appetites, such as the desire for food. He writes: "Because it differs radically from other desire, this desire has been named pure. It is to be known, not by the misleading analogy of other desire, but by giving free rein to intelligent

⁶⁷ Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Insight* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970) 356 = Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 379.

⁶⁸ *Insight* 360 = CWL 3 384.

⁶⁹ *Insight* 370 = CWL 3 395.

⁷⁰ *Insight* 356 = CWL 3 380.

and rational consciousness.”⁷¹ Instead of being grounded in a concupiscent need for self-realization, human cognition rather originates in “a cool, detached, disinterested desire to know.”⁷² The pure desire of the intellect is characteristically free of and “opposed to the inhibitions of cognitional process that arise from other human desires and drives” such as the nutritive and sexual drives. It shuns “other desires ... [and] the narrow confines of their limited range.”⁷³ Unlike, for example, the nutritive appetite which is compelled by the senses, by, perhaps, the aroma of good food cooking, the pure desire to know is not compelled or motivated externally. Rather, the goal of intellectual desire is precisely ‘the questionable,’ that which is not simply present or given as an object to thought, but has yet to be made an object for thought by thought’s own activity. The intellect’s desire signifies an interest in being which lies “immanent within [inquiring intelligence itself] and [is] operative of it.”⁷⁴ This pure desire is itself irreducible and prior to all objective knowledge in the sciences and in philosophy. While the objectifying activity of the intellect reduces the intelligible content of being to a modification of the self and thus becomes one with being, the pure desire is originally related to being not as such an object which is the same as the self, but rather as radically other to thought and, in this otherness, as radically of interest to the intellect and inherently valuable in itself. Thus, characteristically, the pure desire to know “prizes [correct understanding] not because it yields satisfaction but because its content is correct,” where this correctness or correspondence with being is determined by the activity of judgment.⁷⁵ In showing the intellect’s free, disinterested relation to being as a transobjective or pre-objective other, Lonergan’s notion of the pure desire to know thus exposes the benevolence of intellectual desire.

However, this desire is not detached from objective knowledge. As Lonergan states, “the ground of normative objectivity lies in the unfolding of the unrestricted, detached, disinterested desire to know” through vari-

⁷¹ *Insight* 348 = CWL 3 373.

⁷² *Insight* 352 = CWL 3 376.

⁷³ *Insight* 380 = CWL 3 404.

⁷⁴ *Insight* 356 = CWL 3 380.

⁷⁵ *Insight* 349 = CWL 3 374 (emphasis mine).

us stages of human knowledge.⁷⁶ For Lonergan, objectivity consists not simply in the simple conceptual grasp of an essence, but in the intellect's capacity to transcend its concepts and ultimately recover, and consciously appropriate its original relation to being's transcendent value. His work *Insight* itself follows this path of the unfolding of the pure desire to know — a path that leads from mathematical-empirical science to metaphysics and ultimately culminates in moral and religious consciousness. There are three successive 'spheres' of human consciousness: namely, the intellectual, the moral, and the religious.⁷⁷ In the intellectual sphere, the pure desire to know operates as a 'spontaneous' drive which seeks out the intelligible content of being (essences); but it itself has not yet been thematized and grasped as a self-conscious act, and thus, in the intellectual sphere, the human knower lacks the conscious and deliberate decision of an act of moral self-determination.⁷⁸ Moreover, insofar as the intellect has not yet appropriated the meaning of its own desire for truth, it reaches out for being still unreflectively, aiming merely to possess being as an object for thought, and operating therefore according to the dynamics of concupiscence. However, when the intellect does appropriate its own finality, it sees being not simply as a good for the intellect, so that it can satisfy its own natural appetite but as a good in itself and indeed as the universal good of all things. Like the Augustinian *habitus* of wisdom (*sapientia*), human consciousness now consciously decides to override its self-centered interests and turn toward being as the universal good. It chooses not to will finite goods for itself, but instead to will "the order of the universe."⁷⁹ The spontaneous drive to grasp and possess being as the true is thus transmuted into a conscious and "habitual determination of the will itself" not simply to possess being but to love being.⁸⁰ Lonergan writes: "as intellect rises to knowledge of God [as the universal principle of being], the will is called to love God."⁸¹ But, in turn, this moral

⁷⁶ *Insight* 380 = CWL 3 404.

⁷⁷ *Insight* 701 = CWL 3 723.

⁷⁸ *Insight* 701 = CWL 3 723.

⁷⁹ *Insight* 700 = CWL 3 722.

⁸⁰ *Insight* 701 = CWL 3 723.

⁸¹ *Insight* 700 = CWL 3 722.

self-determination of intellectual desire brings with it the problem of good and evil, the struggle against despair in the face of human limitations, and eventually the hope which seeks the final resolution of our moral condition in faith, that is, in humanity's relation to a personal God who is perfect love. In this final, religious sphere of consciousness, the pure desire becomes a 'confident hope' for God's revelation of his own divine wisdom to human consciousness.⁸² Thus the intellect's desire ultimately leads human consciousness beyond itself to a "God whose wisdom designed the order of the universe and whose goodness brings a solution to man's problem of evil."⁸³

For Lonergan, therefore, the aims of objective science cannot be equated with the egoistic interests of the human knower. Rather, these aims must be regarded within the context of humanity's loving and benevolent relationship to God, and must accord with the ethical implications found therein. However, even though the concupiscence which belongs to the intellectual sphere of human consciousness is initially at odds with the ethical demands of benevolence, this opposition is only apparent. For implicitly, from the very start, the truth of the intellect's finality is a desire to love God which needs only to be rendered explicit through a conscious act of self-appropriation. Concupiscence therefore is but the pre-reflective stage of the unfolding of intellectual desire within human consciousness, and thus stands to be transformed and reconciled with benevolence in the inevitable unfolding and fulfillment of our activity of self-consciousness. In contrast to Maritain, for whom the benevolence of the intellect was found in our existential judgments about the external world, and, generally, in the mind's reaching outward and beyond itself toward being as transcendent value in sensible things, for Lonergan the intellect's benevolence is rather found in the mind's transcendental inquiry of itself and is shown to set in motion the development within human consciousness toward an explicit, loving relationship with God. Though very different from Maritain's approach, the interiority of Lonergan's 'transcendental' approach, reminiscent more of Augustine than of Thomas, functions as a complement to Maritain's

⁸² *Insight* 702 = CWL 3 723-724.

⁸³ *Insight* 701 = CWL 3 723.

'realist' resolution to the problem of the unity of concupiscence and benevolence in intellectual desire.

THE DIALECTIC OF LOVE (RAHNER)

As with Lonergan, Rahner's epistemology takes the form of a transcendental science. In Rahner, however, the cooperative relation between concupiscence and benevolence is expressed in and through a dialectical representation of human consciousness. There are three moments to this dialectic: first, a moment of benevolent intersubjectivity, in which the human intellect has a prethematic awareness of its relation to the absolute subjectivity of God; second, a moment of concupiscent being-for-self in which human thought is realized in the conditions of sensibility or in its "conversion to the phantasm"⁸⁴; and, finally, the unity of these two moments of benevolence and concupiscence in the consummation of the intellectual act of knowing.⁸⁵ Let us examine each of these moments in detail.

As in Lonergan, Rahner's epistemology reveals the intellect's benevolence in its unrestricted act of questioning. For Rahner, questioning itself constitutes the starting point of metaphysical thought. In the act of questioning, the question — like Descartes's *cogito* (which now becomes an 'I question') — signifies the unconditioned and prethematic self-awareness of human thought, which is prior to all objective knowledge.⁸⁶ However, precisely insofar as the question is a question to itself, questioning signifies simultaneously the absence or emptiness of human thought to itself. "[The soul] of itself alone is not present to itself."⁸⁷ The questioning self thus contains a moment of negativity. As

⁸⁴ Karl Rahner, S.J., *Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) 230-236.

⁸⁵ See also Thomas Sheehan, *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987) 196.

⁸⁶ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 57-58. See also Richard Schneider, "A Transcendental Philosophy of the Question," *Continuum* 4 (1966) 151; James J. Conlon, "Karl Rahner's Theory of Sensation," *The Thomist* 41 (1977) 403; Kenneth Baker, S.J., "Rahner: Transcendental Method," *Continuum* 2 (1964) 55.

⁸⁷ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 245.

Rahner writes, "the being that must ask is non-being, is deficient in its innermost ground of being."⁸⁸

Inasmuch as the questioner is, as one commentator expresses it, only the act of "presence-by-absence,"⁸⁹ Rahner maintains that being can only be predicated analogously of the being who questions. He understands this analogy of being in terms of being's 'degree' of self-presence. "An existent is present-to-itself insofar as it is being, and vice versa, the degree of this 'subjectivity' is the measure of an existent's intensity."⁹⁰ In turn, the analogous being of the questioner contains an implicit awareness of the prime analogate which, in Rahner's metaphysics, is the fullness of being's presence-to-itself or the perfection of the subjective act, namely, God. The self-luminosity of being "has its full realization, its first and original norm, in Absolute Being which is Absolute Spirit."⁹¹ Through the analogy of being, the questioner already stands in relation to absolute being or, as Rahner writes, "is already with being in its totality."⁹² The question's prethematic awareness of itself thus implies, for Rahner, a concomitant awareness and affirmation of the absolute subject. "In this pre-apprehension as the necessary and always already realized condition of knowledge (even in a doubt, an in-itself, and thus *esse* is affirmed) the existence of an Absolute Being is also affirmed simultaneously."⁹³

The human questioner has a benevolent, other-directed awareness of the Absolute which stands prior to any objective grasp of being, and hence is prior to any concupiscent drive for self-perfection through the noetic acquisition of being. The content of the intellect's prethematic knowledge

⁸⁸ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 72. See also Sheehan, *Karl Rahner* 199; Conlon, "Karl Rahner's Theory of Sensation," 405; Robert Masson, "Rahner and Heidegger: Being, Hearing, and God," *The Thomist* 37 (1973) 466-67.

⁸⁹ Sheehan, *Karl Rahner* 199.

⁹⁰ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 72. See also Karl Rahner, "Aquinas: The Nature of Truth," trans. Andrew Tallon, *Philosophical Theology* disk supp 4 (1989) 71; Sheehan, *Karl Rahner* 146-48; Denis J.M. Bradley, "Rahner's Spirit in the World: Aquinas or Hegel," *The Thomist* 41 (1977) 189.

⁹¹ Rahner, "Aquinas: The Nature of Truth," 62. See also Sheehan, *Karl Rahner* 163; Conlon, "Karl Rahner's Theory of Sensation" 405.

⁹² Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 60, see also 71-72.

⁹³ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 181. See also Masson, "Rahner and Heidegger" 467.

of being is not something which merely perfects the human knower qualitatively. It is rather a perfection which the questioning self already *shares* with the Absolute through the self's participation in the act of thought or in the very perfection of being-subject. For the human intellect, the 'otherness' of being originally signifies not an object to be possessed, but another subject which stands in a relation of intersubjectivity with the human subject. In this sense, intellectual desire is originally related to being not through concupiscence, but through a communion or friendship with the other in the act of being subject.⁹⁴

In Rahner's dialectic, concupiscence arises specifically in the question's moment of negativity or absence-from-self. Inasmuch as the questioning self is this emptiness of being and lack of awareness of itself, it stands in need of mediation by an external source in order to introduce into itself a determinate content of being and of self-awareness. Rahner thus compares the nothingness of human thought to the *tabula rasa* of the potential intellect. "In his first question (which takes place with the question about being as its ground), [the human being] is already *quodammodo omnia* (in a certain way everything), and still he is not yet that, he is still nothing, '*tabula rasa, materia prima in ordine intellectus*' (a clean slate, prime matter in the order of intellect)."⁹⁵ Because it is utterly indeterminate, the moment of negativity serves as the originating principle of receptivity or material openness to the external determinations of being.⁹⁶ Accordingly, Rahner sees sensibility as 'emanating' from the negativity of potential intellect. Sensibility "emanates from the possible intellect" inasmuch as "the possible intellect must of itself create the possibility that another can encounter it objectively."⁹⁷ But in order for sensible consciousness to become substantially and in itself the external, sensible determination, it cannot merely passively receive this determination. Such a merely passive reception of an external determination would imply, like color existing in

⁹⁴ See also Jack Arthur Bonsor, *Rahner, Heidegger, and Truth* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987) 76; Gerald A. McCool, S.J., "The Philosophy of the Human Person in Karl Rahner's Theology," *Theological Studies* 22 (1961) 541-542.

⁹⁵ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 60.

⁹⁶ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 243.

⁹⁷ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 247. See also Sheehan, *Karl Rahner* 243; Conlon, "Karl Rahner's Theory of Sensation" 415.

the air, "only a transitory ontological determination" of the patient.⁹⁸ Instead, sensibility must appropriate the given sensible content for itself by means of its own acquisitive act of being. Thus, according to Rahner, "the reception of the determination by the patient is to be understood as the patient's own active production of the determination."⁹⁹ The activity of sensibility itself, however, is derived from the original act of self-presence that belongs to thought, that is, to the agent intellect. Rahner understands the original active self-presence of thought to be the ontological ground of every determinate act of sensible consciousness. "Spirit actively produces sensibility not merely as a general, empty power, but in its concrete determinateness in each instance."¹⁰⁰ Through this interplay of thought and sensibility, consciousness thus becomes present to itself in the externality or otherness of sensible being, that is, becomes present to itself precisely as other. The human knower, Rahner writes, is "that being which is present to itself in the knowledge of another."¹⁰¹

Accordingly, the *phantasm* or sensible image is not only the locus of the active self-realization of the external agent, but also the locus of the acquisitive self-realization of sensible consciousness. In the phantasm, "we have two substantial, actively self-producing grounds in their respective self-realizations."¹⁰² Agent and patient come to be in the phantasm each according to its own act of existence and for the sake of its own concrete realization. Rahner states that "the two productions [of the agent and the patient], although they meet in the one ontological actuality, nevertheless have an essentially different finality."¹⁰³ For its part, sensibility is an integral part of human consciousness precisely insofar as it is the concupiscent act of being-for-itself, that is, the desire of consciousness to realize itself for its own sake, over against another (the external agent), in the conditions of sensible or 'bodily' existence.

⁹⁸ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 337.

⁹⁹ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 350. See also Sheehan, *Karl Rahner* 246.

¹⁰⁰ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 323.

¹⁰¹ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 244.

¹⁰² Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 362.

¹⁰³ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 364.

However, this acquisitive being-for-itself of sensibility also signifies simultaneously a return to the original benevolent being-with-the-other of prethematic consciousness, which has Absolute Spirit as its ultimate end. In the first place, the unity of the phantasm signifies the transcendence or overcoming of the formerly external or material separation of beings from each other, that is, the former separation of sensible consciousness and the real thing. In the phantasm, knower and known have become materially and formally one, sharing the same matter and the same formal determination of being.¹⁰⁴ Their otherness is no longer that of a material or formal estrangement; rather, they are set in distinction from one another simply through the uniqueness of their respective acts of self-actualization. Each is a self-realizing subject over against the other. As Rahner writes, sensible consciousness ultimately "is not being for itself, but being for and to another."¹⁰⁵ In the being-for-itself of sensibility, consciousness in fact recaptures its original intersubjective relation to being — albeit here in relation to finite or concrete determinations of being, and not yet in relation to the Absolute which is its ultimate end.

In sensibility, therefore, there is already present the dialectical unity of thought's prethematic, unconditioned, and benevolent consciousness of being with the concupiscent, material self-realization of being in space and time. The concrete and acquisitive self-realization of consciousness in the phantasm is but a moment of that externalization whose inner or 'hidden' reality is constituted by an intersubjective or spiritual union of beings. On the one hand, the content of sensible knowledge already contains in itself a transcendence of the material conditions of human knowledge, that is, the phantasm is already implicitly the concept, the consummation of the cognitive act. "The [human] spirit produces the phantasm and, as free, already and always keeps it abstracted in itself."¹⁰⁶ As Thomas Sheehan notes, "the whole unity of human knowledge ... has already happened at the moment of sensation. Sensation in its full human breadth is judgment, abstractive referral of universals to singulars, and knowledge of beings in

¹⁰⁴ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 364.

¹⁰⁵ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 80.

¹⁰⁶ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 381; see also 235.

their unified beingness as a whole."¹⁰⁷ In turn, the concept is here present in its dialectical relation and reference to the phantasm of sensible consciousness. As Rahner writes, "conversion to the phantasm and abstraction are moments of a single process and are inseparably related to each other in a relationship of reciprocal priority."¹⁰⁸ Similarly: "The actuality of [human] spirit is known as the complete actuality of sensibility. The *a priori* actuality of the [human] spirit becomes conscious as the form of the sensible given, of the phantasm."¹⁰⁹

Accordingly, the concupiscence of human knowledge, far from leading thought away from its benevolent relation to being-as-subject, far from being merely an acquisitive drive to possess being, in fact serves to realize benevolence in the concrete conditions of worldly existence.¹¹⁰ Thus, Rahner maintains that love itself is the aim of every act of knowledge: "Any act of knowledge of a finite being which does not want to see itself, in the last analysis, as something which reaches the perfection of its own essence in love, turns into darkness."¹¹¹

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the Thomistic thought of the twentieth century is characteristically pluralistic in its methodological approach to epistemological questions. While 'transcendental' Thomists such as Lonergan and Rahner take an interior path to the transcendent reality of God through a reflection on the mind's relationship to this reality, 'realist' Thomists such as Maritain and Gilson take the exterior route to transcendent being through our knowledge of the sensible world. Historically, these two methodological approaches to truth have been at odds. The modern,

¹⁰⁷ Sheehan, *Karl Rahner* 197.

¹⁰⁸ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 266. See also Sheehan, *Karl Rahner*, 196.

¹⁰⁹ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 285.

¹¹⁰ Andrew Tallon calls Rahnerian concupiscence "the experienced dialectic of spirit and matter" (Andrew Tallon, "Spirit, Matter, Becoming: Karl Rahner's Spirit in the World," *Modern Schoolman* 48 [1971] 162).

¹¹¹ Karl Rahner, S.J., *Hearers of the Word*, trans. Michael Richards (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 100. See also Mark Lloyd Taylor, *God is Love: A Study in the Theology of Karl Rahner* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986) 57.

critical stance of the 'transcendental' Thomists, which sees the mind's relation to truth as the foundational *question* for metaphysics, has proved problematic to traditional 'realist' Thomists.¹¹² Conversely, the 'pre-modern' epistemology of 'realist' Thomists, which rather takes the mind's relation to truth as *an unquestionable given*, is considered to be naive by 'transcendental' Thomists.¹¹³ However, the convergence of these disparate approaches on the theme of the intimate relation between love and knowledge explored in this essay suggests a certain methodological complementarity alongside the clear differences between them. For, as we have seen, the insight that the fulfillment of our knowledge ultimately consists in the intellect's benevolent love of being permeates both the 'transcendental' Thomist's reflection on human consciousness and the 'realist' Thomist's analysis of our knowledge of the sensible world. At a certain base level, then, these two types of Thomism are in agreement not only with regard to the content of knowledge (namely, extramental reality, such that both are 'realist' on this level), but also with regard to the methodological importance of the role played by benevolence in acquiring knowledge of this extramental content.

Moreover, by showing how the dynamics of benevolence and concupiscence are at work in the divergent accounts of human knowledge given by Maritain, Lonergan, and Rahner, I am arguing that the mind's benevolent and ultimately ethical relation to being is a pervasive and essential ingredient in Thomistic epistemology which needs to be brought more clearly to the fore especially in the context of contemporary debates about metaphysics. For its ethical account of knowledge significantly distinguishes Thomism from the subjectivistic metaphysics of the moderns which fails to acknowledge fully the role of desire in knowledge (giving the mind more the character of a machine than of an aspect of our humanity), and yet operatively and naively enact this desire in the pernicious form of a spontaneous, concupiscent drive for knowledge or for conceptual mastery over being. The idea that the drive for knowledge is

¹¹² See Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983).

¹¹³ See Bernard Lonergan, S.J., "Metaphysics as Horizon" in *Collection* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) = *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

somehow ethically neutral or above ethical censure is illusory, contradictory, and even dangerous. For precisely inasmuch as the mind has its own desire and competes with other types of desire its activity in the world quite obviously has ethical significance. On the practical level, modernity's aim for conceptual mastery over being, which according to Heidegger feeds into contemporary technology, can be said to bring with it a galaxy of concrete ethical problems which have been voiced, earlier in the century by Maritain, Pieper, and Simon (as mentioned earlier), by postmodern authors, and more recently by, for example, pro-life and animal rights activists and environmentalists. It is hard to deny the relationship between the mind's desire to assimilate being through the reductionistic, objectifying activity of conceptual thought and the increasing disregard in contemporary culture for the intrinsic value of nature, the interior life of the person, minorities, and foreign cultures.

Inevitably metaphysics must, for the sake of both theory and praxis, explore the nature of the intellect's finality in order to determine whether the intellect finds the proper satisfaction of its desire in power or in love, in egoistic possessiveness or in the benevolent recognition of and regard for otherness. And it is to this exploration that the present essay has attempted to make a contribution.

ENGAGED AGENCY AND THE NOTION OF THE SUBJECT*

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1. INTRODUCTION

THE FOLLOWING PAPER is divided into two main parts. The first seeks to develop the basic contours of the critique of subjectivity which have surfaced most radically in the present century. As a kind of guide to focus the discussion I have chosen the work of philosopher Charles Taylor, who has gained international fame on account of his reflections on this very issue. The second portion of the paper is an attempt to resituate the contributions of the late Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) in the light of this 'relativizing' move, whose cognitional analysis, with its basis in human subjectivity, has evoked heated discussions about the validity of such undertakings in a so-called 'postmodern' world.

Due to the highly programmatic nature of this investigation, I have had to isolate only certain basic features of their thought. Taylor, for instance, speaks not only of the limitations of 'disengaged reason,' but also of 'the punctual self,' and of 'an atomistic construal of society.'¹

*The following is largely the result of a seminar offered by Charles Taylor in the Fall of 1995 at McGill University entitled "Overcoming Epistemology," which covered (in cursory manner of course) the thought of Descartes, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Foucault, Habermas, and Rorty. I wish to thank Professor Taylor for what turned out to be, by necessity it seems, a very stimulating *lecture series* due to a rather large enrollment. In addition, I need to acknowledge the assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which has allowed me the leisure to pursue such topics.

¹ For a brief overview see Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) 1-19. His larger work, *Sources*

Lonergan, on the other hand, traces not only the fine lines of cognitional process, and its heuristic constitution, but also of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. "The objective of the pure desire [to know] is the content of knowing rather than the act."² Limiting the scope of the discussion, however, through fundamental analysis, has the advantage of both grounding a credible discussion and initiating further discussion of these and related topics. It is to this end that I offer the following observations.

2. RELATIVIZING (A) SUBJECT: TO ENTANGLE A NOTION

Enough time has elapsed since the debut of Lonergan's philosophy of mind to engender the ambivalent reactions that usually accompany major systems of thought. Cynthia Crysdale speaks of three generations of scholars "who are accepting Lonergan's invitation to self-appropriation."³ To that we would have to add the collective alter ego of three generations of scholars who reject that invitation, either in whole or in part, for various reasons to which I will return shortly. Within that tension are others whose sympathies lie on both sides of the debate convinced of "a deeper obscurity hidden in Lonergan's lucidity."⁴ What this might mean — or perhaps what I would like it to mean — is that Lonergan's position is sufficiently elusive to remove him from his often-invoked role as a spokesman for a party line and, consequently, as the obvious target of ensuing (counter-)attacks. Ariadne's thread appears to be emerging in a maze of protagonist/antagonist certainties.

of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) goes into greater detail.

² Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, revised and augmented edition, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 373.

³ Cynthia Crysdale, "Introduction," *Lonergan and Feminism*, ed. Cynthia Crysdale (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) 3.

⁴ Philip McShane, "General Method," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995) 50. Such 'hiddenness,' as McShane's cryptic phrase implies, is coterminous with Lonergan's statements; it is, in other words, to use Foucault's terms, a 'positivity.' See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1972) 125-128.

In the Introduction of his 'little book' (as he was fond of calling it), *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957), Lonergan makes the somewhat muffled triumphal claim that he has "hit upon a set of ideas of fundamental importance," the upshot of which is the appropriation of one's 'self' as a knower.⁵ This rather sanguine conviction, along with its evidently classical aim, has stigmatized Lonergan and the Lonergan community as hopelessly modern in the Kantian, foundationalist sense of providing grounds (that is, *sub-jectum*) for the sciences once and for all. Charles Davis, for example, refers to Lonergan's efforts as an untimely attempt to resituate Thomism within 'the philosophy of consciousness,' a Habermasian signpost of destitute philosophy.⁶ Fanning this already blazing flame are certain unwittingly combative claims to the effect that Lonergan is 'the philosopher of human subjectivity' who has provided 'an initial completion' to the modern turn, the turn to the subject.⁷ Given the recent emphasis in philosophy on decentralizing the epistemological subject, it is really no wonder that such understandings incur the academic bane of ultramodernist labels. It seems to me that something resembling a Heideggerian 'clearing' (*Lichtung*) is desperately needed today to temper the discussion.

⁵ *Insight*, CWL 3 24, 343-371.

⁶ Charles Davis, "Post-modernity and the Formation of the Self," *Religion and the Making of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 154. Davis's assessment is rather premature, given the role he attributes to reason in the theological endeavor. See, for example, Charles Davis, "Theology for Tomorrow," *The Promise of Critical Theology: Essays in Honour of Charles Davis*, ed. Marc P. Lalonde (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995) 28, where John Milbank is rejected on the grounds that "[reason] is not so easily banished" from theology as Milbank would have us believe. With all due respect, this sounds perfectly Lonerganian, even though it is intentionally Habermasian. In any case, Davis is not alone in his assessment. See Ronald H. McKinney, "Deconstructing Lonergan," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 31 (1991) 81-93; Schubert M. Ogden, "Lonergan and the Subjectivist Principle," *Language, Truth, and Meaning*, Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970, ed. Philip McShane (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972) 218-235; Richard Topping, "Transcendental Method and Private Language," *ARC* 21 (1993) 11-26.

⁷ The former statement is found in Giovanni B. Sala, *Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, trans. Joseph Spoerl, ed. Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) xii; the latter in Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 25, studies which are praiseworthy in and of themselves.

Dissatisfaction with what has come to be known as the 'Enlightenment project,' a crucial aspect of which is the centrality of the knowing subject in practically every field of discourse, has been voiced in a number of ways since the advent of Heidegger's classic *Destruktion* in *Sein und Zeit* (1927) — a development which can be traced back to the Nietzschean and Marxian critiques of Hegel. Ambiguities abide, however, with regard to the role of the knowing subject in the light of this arguably legitimate onslaught. After all, Heidegger did believe that representational thought, which begins with Descartes, "can still be 'rescued'."⁸ Rescue attempts are as varied as those who allow for a modest notion of subjectivity to re-enter the debate. One such recent attempt is from Charles Taylor whose monumental stroll through the history of the concept reveals that the contemporary case against what he calls 'disengaged subjectivity,' largely a Continental phenomenon, while necessary to continually raise anew, "doesn't invalidate (though it may limit the scope of) self-responsible reason and freedom."⁹ Although Taylor does not recruit Lonergan to this constructive task, his reliance on figures like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Wittgenstein, and Michael Polanyi to do so yields an interesting framework within which one may reassess Lonergan's contribution.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962) 134. Complications appear to arise when discussing Heidegger's so-called *Kehre* ('turn') from the thinking of *Sein und Zeit* (1927) to that which begins approximately in the mid-thirties, with *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935) for example. Interpreters of Heidegger imagine *Sein und Zeit* to be guided, hence trapped, by the suppositions of transcendental subjectivism, from which Heidegger tried to free himself in his later writings. Frederick A. Olafson rightly argues that this is a fictional understanding of Heidegger, which takes his mid-thirties reorientation as a matter of replacing one set of concepts by another. Olafson conceives the situation as one in which Heidegger shifts the weight of emphasis from one term to another "within his central distinctions" in *Sein und Zeit*. Contrary to popular opinion, Heidegger "did not ... abandon the distinctions themselves or, what would have amounted to much the same thing, the requirement that each term in these distinctions be linked to the other" (Olafson, "The Unity of Heidegger's Thought," *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993] 98). See also Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1987) of which his article intends to be a summary.

⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self* 514.

'Disengaged subjectivity' is Taylor's shorthand for that level of rational reflexivity dominated by Descartes's 'ontologizing' of an experiential instant, so that what is an elementary conscious differentiation between objects 'out there' and the awareness of them 'in here' becomes the very constitution of the mind itself.¹⁰ The *telos* of Descartes's ontologizing is indubitable knowledge which is attained only through a properly guided method of distinguishing the contents of the mind, what is in *res cogitans*, from external reality, *res extensa*, which includes, of course, our bodies. Prior to this epoch-making move, there was little, if any, talk about a 'certainty' which cogitating egos could generate for themselves. Even with Augustine, Descartes's so-called predecessor of inwardness, the *subjectum* of the Cogito has not quite been reached. To be sure, the 'proto-cogito' of the *Contra Academicos* argues similarly for an indubitable knowledge of one's existence based on rational argument alone ("If I am deceived, I exist!"), but that is a far cry from the shift affected by Descartes himself. The source of truth, for Augustine, though perceived inwardly, is and always remains independent of the knower. In other words, Augustine's apprehension of truth does not result in an internalizing of its source, as it does in Descartes.¹¹

Heidegger describes this shift from another angle in terms of a (literally) bad translation, an unfortunate transposition of ontic primacy. The Greek understanding of *υποκείμενον*, which names and gives priority to that-which-lies-before, is supplanted by the Cartesian *subjectum*, the being upon which all that is or may be is grounded. Thus the *subjectum* becomes 'the representative' (*der Repräsentant*) of truth, "the setting in which whatever is must henceforth set itself forth, must present itself, that is, be picture," in place of truth's 'apprehender' (*der Vernehmer*), the receiver of the presencing of Being.¹² The distinction, while not all that

¹⁰ See Charles Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein," *Philosophical Arguments* 64. Taylor reserves the term *ontologizing* for Descartes's tendency to read 'the ideal method' (his method) into the constitution of the mind. My 'innovation,' which refers to Descartes's ontologizing of 'an experiential instant,' merely distinguishes basis (experience) from aim (method) in that process.

¹¹ See Taylor, *Sources of the Self* 127-142.

¹² See Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1977) 128, 131-132, 147.

obvious at first, has to do with the difference between the intimate, less pretentious role of hearing, perceiving, understanding (*vernehmen*) and the ambitious, technological role of setting-before, representing, objectifying (*vor-stellen*). The latter, which Heidegger clearly marks as the hubris of onto-theological thinking, entails the binary dynamic of bringing what lies present-at-hand as something which stands over-against, only to force it back into this relationship, to sanction it, as the normative way of being.¹³ This, according to Heidegger, radically alters the Greek sense for the primacy of that which presences in favor of the primacy of the one who represents.

These, in brief, are the elements of disengaged analysis that allow us to devise pictures of reality that serve as a basis for 'true' knowing, a basis against which we are persuaded to measure our experience. Fully aware that our pictures are important means of gaining insight into reality, Taylor rejects this view ('representational' he calls it) because it dissociates human beings from their world of experience, engendering the heroism of disenchantment which so plagues modern consciousness. The problem seems to hinge on what Alfred North Whitehead termed the *fallacy of misplaced concreteness*, paraphrased here as the transposition of 'reality' with 'picture,' what amounts to a confusion of bases. As we will see momentarily, Taylor, following the lead of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (among others), argues for the reverse. There cannot be a picture of something unless that something gives itself to be pictured.¹⁴ C. Taylor, "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments," in Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* 28.¹⁵ Inattention to this and other factors leads to the mistaken assumption that reality consists in the proper representation of some object or, as Heidegger would say, in the 'correctness' (*Richtigkeit*) of our assertions.¹⁶ Instead of contributing to a greater appreciation of our

¹³ See Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture" 131.

¹⁴ This is another way, perhaps a more fundamental way of saying: "there can't be experience of something unless it is [already] coherent."

¹⁵ Charles Taylor, "The Validity of Transcendental Argument," *Philosophical Arguments* 28).

¹⁶ See Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, revised and expanded edition, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1993) 115-138.

being-in-the-world,¹⁷ this approach strives to liberate us from such a comportment in the hopes of establishing greater certainty about that world, as though one could attain a sure foothold outside the game.

As an alternative to the reigning narrative of disengagement Taylor opts for a revolution of the 'given' center, a shift from the foreground of an existing, regional dynamic to its background, its *conditio sine qua non*. And yet more than a simple shift of focus is involved, since a mere displacement of perspectives continues to presuppose the dualist imagination of a world of subjects and objects, except that this time we are looking, as it were, from the side of the object. Better to speak of an expanding viewpoint from within a foreground awareness which is embedded in and affected by glimpses of background intelligibility. Taylor's concept of an embodied or engaged agency hardly makes sense otherwise.

This intriguing notion of 'the background' is, for Taylor, all-pervasive, multi-dimensional, and paradoxical. As the condition for the possibility of intelligibility it both grounds and penetrates every particular and social concretion of intelligible practice, whatever that may be. Funneled fundamentally through our perceptual field, it provides for the meaningful, mostly tacit discrimination of an 'up' and 'down,' 'side-to-side' relationality, without which permanent disorientation would result. Indeed, such an unthinkable circumstance would eliminate dis/orientation altogether from the experiential field. The dimension of background serves as the setting within which objectification is made possible, for "[w]e stand always and already in Being, in our belongingness to Being."¹⁸ This applies also, if not more so, to the understanding (*Verstand*) which is riveted to the pre-understanding (*Vorverständnis*), that universe of meaning which precedes objectification,

¹⁷ Taylor's phrase to describe Heidegger's 'In-der-Welt-sein,' especially the element of 'in-ness,' is 'contact with reality.' I refrain from using the expression because of the obvious temptation to identify it with the naive realism Lonergan has so convincingly laid to rest. See *Insight*, CWL 3 278, 344, 345, 396, 431, 437-441, 450, 519-520, 603-606, 657-658, 669. But it is clear that Taylor intends 'contact' to be understood ontologically, better: phenomenologically, not cognitively or epistemologically.

¹⁸ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987) 96.

guided in large by our presuppositions. We are at the height of folly when we presume that we can safely set aside the irritant circle Heidegger wrote about to start anew from some unprejudiced basis.¹⁹ To borrow Wittgenstein's phrase, 'a great deal of stage-setting' is presupposed by the emergence of new forms, even if concocted antithetically to prior forms.²⁰

What is paradoxical about 'the background' is that it always remains background, undergirding the intelligibility which pervades our every abstraction (perceptual) and explication (intellectual). Taylor puts it this way, "When we find a certain experience intelligible, what we are attending to, explicitly and expressly, is this experience. The context stands as the unexplicit horizon within which — or to vary the image, as the vantage point out of which — this experience can be understood. To use Michael Polanyi's language, it is subsidiary to the focal object of awareness; it is what we are 'attending from' as we attend to the experience."²¹ Thus even our acts of explication take place within a background of meaning which can never *ipso facto* become foreground, for every consequent act supposes an ancillary background that eludes, finally, full representation. Taylor provides a Polanyian twist to Heidegger's ontological difference.

¹⁹ See Heidegger, *Being and Time* 194-95, 362-363. See also Lonergan, *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 181-182. Evidently, this is what Descartes attempted to do (*Discours de la Méthode*, Part 2). That is why Hans-Georg Gadamer has sought to overturn the traditional notion of 'prejudice,' understood as inherently adverse, arguing instead that prejudices are the necessary preconditions for our openness to the world. "They are simply conditions whereby we experience something, whereby what we encounter says something to us" (Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," trans. David Linge, in *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critiques*, ed. Josef Bleicher [London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980] 133). See, in connection with this, Jürgen Habermas, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critiques* 181-211, who, desirous of preserving certain Enlightenment ideals (that is, critical-interpretive reason), cautions against an uncritical appropriation of Gadamer's semi-romanticist hermeneutic.

²⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1958) par. 257.

²¹ Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein" 68-69.

This entire dynamic I view as one of 'entanglement,' the entanglement or reintegration of the human subject in the world of Being, in appreciation of what John D. Caputo so amiably describes as "the original difficulty of life."²² It is achieved, if you will, through relativizing a time-honored, seemingly commonsensical distinction (subject-object) founded on an originating *Cogito* ('I think'). What is not at issue here is relativism. Objectification, that prized mode of disengaged analysis, is permitted, so long as its reasonable content is understood relative to the greater background of meaning which precedes and supports it. Put in different terms, human subjectivity is too circumscribed and fragile a reality upon which to base 'a' universe of Being and its possibility for emergence.²³ Heraclitus's flux is felt often enough to shatter Promethean convictions to the contrary. And yet some proportionate role granted to 'the subject' need not entail a dreaded metaphysics of escape. Indeed, nothing prevents so-called non-metaphysical propensities from slipping into triumphalisms of the asymmetrical. Taylor's concession that human beings ('agents') fill an important, albeit modest, capacity in this narrative strikes me not only as a balanced presupposition, supported by over two centuries of inquiry, but also as the only credible means of introducing Lonergan and his so-called 'subjectivist bias' into the debate.

3. REINTRODUCING (A) SUBJECT: TO DISENTANGLE A NOTION

Lonergan's critical reading of the philosophical/scientific tradition is one way of introducing his contribution to the contemporary scene.²⁴ That

²² Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* 1.

²³ One may argue that certain so-called anti-subjectivist stances in contemporary philosophy actually embrace the 'radical' implications of subjectivity without wanting to refer to it by that name. It is similar to the Heideggerian dilemma of placing Being under erasure for fear of its confusion with being(s). See, for instance, the intriguing discussion of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, "'Eating Well' or the Calculation of the Subject," *Points . . . : Interviews, 1974-1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf and others (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994) 255-287, especially 255-264. Objectivism, incessant emphasis on the 'what,' is the culprit here, not subjectivity per se, the functioning of a 'who,' a *Dasein* constantly on the move, pausing now and then to find its bearings through reflective consciousness.

²⁴ Joseph Fitzpatrick takes this approach in his recent article, "'Town Criers of Inwardness' or Reflections on Rorty," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995) 1-33. See also *Insight*, CWL 3 426-455.

criticism depends for its sustenance on what he considers to be the failure of distinguishing two types of 'realism,' the realism of the extroverted animal and that of rational consciousness. "They are juxtaposed in Cartesian dualism with its rational *Cogito, ergo sum* and with its unquestioning extroversion to substantial extension. They are separated and alienated in the subsequent rationalist and empiricist philosophies. They are brought together again to cancel each other in Kantian criticism."²⁵ By saying so Lonergan subtly distances himself from the ontologizing tendencies of his philosophical forebears, but his continued emphasis on the centrality of the knower makes him vulnerable to charges of subjectivism and, what amounts to the same thing, the forgetfulness of Being.²⁶

Without wanting to belittle this wave of criticism, since I share many of its concerns, there is a tendency to overlook the functional dimension of primacy in Lonergan's notion of the subject qua experiencing, understanding, judging, and decision-making being (*das Seiende*).²⁷ At one level (cognitive-epistemological), it is to mistake the 'moving viewpoint' of the subject for the objectification of that viewpoint; at another level (ontological), it is to mistake the 'moving viewpoint' for that in relation to

²⁵ *Insight*, CWL 3 11-12.

²⁶ I have in mind here passages like the (in)famous slogan mentioned twice in *Insight*: "Thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments of understanding" (*Insight*, CWL 3 22, 769-770). And, for instance, what I think is the unnecessarily problematical statement on p. 434 of the same work, owing to a contentious word ('center'): the subject is "the experienced center of experiencing, the intelligent center of inquiry, insight, and formulations, the rational center of critical reflection, scrutiny, hesitation, doubt, and frustration."

²⁷ 'Decision' is Lonergan's fourth level of consciousness which enters into the discussion as a properly distinct level in *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972). Actually, it begins to crop up as a distinct level as early as Lonergan's 1959 lectures at Xavier University, Cincinnati, only two years after the publication of *Insight*, "Art" and "History." See *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 209, 252. See also Lonergan's 1960 lecture at the Thomas More Institute, Montreal, "The Philosophy of History," in the recently released *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 72. In any case, Lonergan does speak of 'the decision' in *Insight*, the first draft of which was completed in the summer of 1953, but only as a corollary of the judgment. See *Insight*, CWL 3 636-639.

which and on account of which that viewpoint moves. Since a good deal has been written on the former, I will treat it only to the extent that a grasp of the latter requires it.

In 1970, at the end of the International Lonergan Congress held in Florida, Lonergan, no doubt exhausted by overwhelmingly keen, sometimes severely critical, analyses of his thought, made the following statement: "I cannot regret the way I wrote *Insight*. My purpose was not a study of human life but a study of human understanding."²⁸ Truth to tell, a study as general as 'human life' would detract little from the difficulties of Lonergan's interlocutors, since for them the problem is precisely 'the human' as such.²⁹ Nevertheless Lonergan's outburst suggests that questions about 'the background' and, even more remotely, 'the Open' (*das Offene*), while not explicit concerns in *Insight*, may be facilitated by his study of human understanding.³⁰ As we are about to see, what concerns him is how that background becomes foreground in its multidimensional aspects.

Such a move, of course, is qualitatively distinct from the one which attempts 'to guard' the background as background, something Taylor, in the shadow of Heidegger and others, seeks to do with all his energy. And yet it asks the related question, What does it mean to guard (to think

²⁸ Lonergan, "Bernard Lonergan Responds," in *Language, Truth, and Meaning* 310. *Language, Truth, and Meaning* is the second volume of papers given at the Congress, which is devoted largely to the philosophical implications of Lonergan's thought (that is, *Insight*). The first volume, *Foundations of Theology*, Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970, edited by Philip McShane (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), concentrates, obviously, on the theological-methodological import of his thought (that is, *Insight* and certain pre-*Method* theological publications).

²⁹ In order to locate this problem more comprehensively see Heidegger's important "Letter on Humanism," *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)* 217-265. See also Derrida's comments in "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject" 267-271, which ought not to be taken outside their grammatological context, as Heidegger's the ontological.

³⁰ The implications of this are far-reaching, especially if we understand provocative statements like 'the death of the subject' to mean: the end of an era no longer committed to the assumptions of a subject and a world of objects. Now is the time to investigate the workings of subjectivity which, in Foucault's words, "requires patience and a knowledge of details" ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow [New York: Pantheon Books, 1984] 76). Is this not what Lonergan attempts to do, from a specifically cognitional viewpoint, in the early chapters of *Insight* (that is, chapters 1-5)?

about) the background as background? The question shifts attention from the aim of the act (background as background), untroubled by the prospect that that aim is recognized as ultimately nonobjectifiable, to the act itself (thinking about), to the act implicit in the explicating endeavor. Lonergan puts it amiably as follows: "Archimedes had his insight by thinking about the crown; we shall have ours by thinking about Archimedes."³¹ Failure to note this, along with the complexities of a non-totalizing appreciation of both approaches, has led to a confusion of the issues by followers of Lonergan and his assailants respectively.³² It seems to me that Lonergan's own view of the relation, furnished as it is through his understanding of cognitional process, is by far the more prudent strategically.

That there is such a thing as 'the background' Lonergan spends little time arguing for. Indeed, he affirms it as common knowledge that has made much headway in the present century through the insights of specialists working in diverse fields of interest.³³ In the language of *Method in Theology* (1972), we are born into a world that is continually mediated by meaning. As for the present discussion, however, Lonergan's main contribution pivots on certain differentiations he makes concerning background meaning and those who would think it.

³¹ *Insight*, CWL 3 28.

³² A case in point is the in-house debate between Michael Maxwell and Jerome Miller. It is my contention that Maxwell depreciates the delicacy of the situation when he reads his otherwise insightful analysis of Lonergan against Miller's. See M. P. Maxwell, Jr., "A Critique of Jerome Miller's Interpretation of Lonergan on Knowing and Being," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11 (1993) 229-241, and his subsequent reaction to Miller's "A Reply to Michael Maxwell," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994) 109-119: "Deconstruction or Genuineness: A Response to Jerome Miller," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995) 83-87. In addition to the fact that contemporary philosophy cannot be reduced to a disjunction ('deconstruction or genuineness'), Maxwell has to realize that an approach like Miller's, which aims to 'think along with' Lonergan, in connection with the concerns of, say, Heidegger, Derrida, and Levinas, is not likely to resemble a program which "merely exegetes what [Lonergan] has to say." See Bernard McGinn, "Theological Reflections on 'Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon'," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994) 205-206.

³³ Lonergan's most technically efficient term to describe this is 'post-systematic differentiation of consciousness,' although its properly differentiated apprehension is reserved for the specialist. See *Philosophy of God, and Theology: The Relationship between Philosophy of God and the Functional Speciality, Systematics* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973) 8.

For Lonergan, then, the background as such is intersubjective, artistic, symbolic, and linguistic.³⁴ It refers to the ready-made world we embody in our daily lives, the world that constitutes the spontaneity of our actions and our decisions, and the meaningfulness of our interaction with others. Background discourse on the other hand (especially Heidegger's version) is a separate issue altogether. It involves a withdrawal from the ready-made world, in which meaning is instrumentalized to serve various functions in society, to one that is "other, different, novel, strange, new, remote, intimate."³⁵ Lonergan regards this as the workings of a 'purely experiential pattern' which is tendentiously artistic — a happy coincidence given Heidegger's association of the presencing of Being with *τεχνη*.³⁶ While objectification is part and parcel of that pattern, its form is unlike that of the conceptual which intellectualizes, systematizes, instrumentalizes. Artistic expression harbors a completely life-relational intelligibility that does not admit formulation.³⁷ Crudely put, it lies somewhere between the practical and the conceptual.

We see this further in Lonergan's characterization of Heidegger's burden. Heidegger, he argues, intends the ontic (Being as such) fully aware that ontology (the *λόγος* about Being) remains forever incommensurate with such aspirations. The technical peculiarities of his discourse reflect this perfectly. Instead of borrowing standard terms (ab)used in other areas of research, Heidegger concocts his own to invite the reader's participation in her belongingness to Being unimpeded, ideally, by the conventions of other patterns (that is, the intellectual). This, according to Lonergan, is the principle reason Heidegger objects to words like 'subject' and 'object,' inherently epistemological designations, to describe the intimacy and dissimilarity of *das Seiende* and *Sein*. The introduction of such like terms into the pattern apparently hinder the

³⁴ See *Method in Theology* 57-72.

³⁵ *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 216.

³⁶ See Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)* 318-319, 339-341. See also *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 190, 216.

³⁷ See *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 219.

elusive primordially of the experience, which his expression strives to emulate. "You can see from that position, of course, that there is no question of getting on to any ontology, which is to attain to rational affirmation."³⁸ Heidegger agrees. That judgment occurs at all is among the marvels that rivets his attention to the arational, the *Urgrund* of rationality.

Where to situate Taylor in all this? While Lonergan would be less prone to identify Taylor's mode of expression along strictly 'artistic' lines, owing to its predominantly logical form, we can rest assured that Taylor represents some analytic paraphrase of that pattern, as Lonergan arguably does. When Taylor spearheads the contemporary attack on representational thought, he adopts a line of criticism that owes its very sustenance to artistic expression without being particularly artistic about it. Despite inevitable opposition, Taylor sets the 'elemental meaning' of artistic expression within the conceptual field,³⁹ with the sole purpose of securing the preeminence of that meaning over its sundry representations. For him, then, genuine representation is one that seeks to illumine — not master — that meaning, establishing greater contact with its tacit rhythms, "which, after all, comes from the intelligence of the subject."⁴⁰ We now turn to the implications of this relative clause with a view to the ontological level of relation that I mentioned earlier.

The examination of something, namely all -ologies (λόγοι), Lonergan identifies as being in a properly *intellectual* pattern of experience — a pattern that concerns Taylor more than Heidegger. Lonergan's notion of the subject, which he conceives in terms of a heuristic structure of conscious operations, is an explication at this level of being, due to this level of being. It is a heightened, consequent awareness of an already functioning reality, the implicit, polymorphic nature of which is ontically

³⁸ *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 189.

³⁹ See *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 217 and *Method in Theology* 63. I think it safe to say that 'elemental meaning' is another way, Lonergan's way, of indicating 'the background' of meaning, which Heidegger and Taylor express differently, according to the demands of their individual patterns. See *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 215-217; *Method in Theology* 63, 67.

⁴⁰ *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 189, a comment Lonergan applies to Heidegger, although I tend to the view that it applies less controversially to Taylor.

inseparable from the universe of meaning.⁴¹ Objectifying that awareness through conceptual means does not necessarily sever the intimacy of that relationship. It is but a withdrawal for return, "a pause, a stance, the stabilizing arrest, the thesis, or rather the hypothesis we will always need."⁴²

A functioning world order (an intermingling of 'ordinary and originary meaningfulness'), its intelligibility, does not depend on keen attempts to objectify that order.⁴³ Actually, the reverse is the case. Objectifying moves presuppose and are upheld by an established order. In other words, intellectual disengagement begins with and ought to end in engagement. Not only do we think from some perspective, taking for granted some 'thing,' but we also think relative to that perspective, reaping certain benefits from it that often enrich our daily living. Lonergan's cognitional theory, which is clearly a 'disengaged' analysis about how things are (but no more so than Taylor's own expression), reflects the role of representation Taylor deems authentic, conducive to our being-in-the-world. "It's asking people to *discover* in themselves what they are. ... They can arrive at conclusions different from mine on the basis of what they *find* in themselves."⁴⁴ This mien is that of the apprehender, not the representative.

As a given unity which experiences, understands, and judges,⁴⁵ 'the subject' does not — indeed, cannot — ground Being. It is, on the contrary, the gift of Being. *Es, das Sein, gibt* (Heidegger). In order to distinguish between the facticity of this ontic/ontological relation and subsequent explications Lonergan introduces the terms subject-as-subject⁴⁶ and

⁴¹ This in agreement with Miller's contention that method in Lonergan, a mode of intelligent being, is quite literally an afterthought, "a thought that occurs after thought has already happened" (Miller, "All Love is Self-Surrender: Reflections on Lonergan after Post-Modernism," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 [1995] 78).

⁴² Derrida, "'Eating Well' or the Calculation of the Subject" 286.

⁴³ *Method in Theology* 255-256. See also note 33 above.

⁴⁴ Lonergan, "An Interview with Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J.," ed. Philip McShane, in Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, ed. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974) 213, emphasis added.

⁴⁵ See *Insight*, CWL 3 350-52.

⁴⁶ Subject-as-subject is used interchangeably by Lonergan with the terms 'notion of subject' (which is a heuristic designation, not to be confused with descriptive or explanatory

subject-as-object. This relativizes epistemologically the subject-object distinction as traditionally understood in an effort to secure the subject's (nodal) equiprimodality with the universe of Being, Taylor's background. Subject-as-object is Lonergan's way of referring to the ontologized basis of representational thinking, the primordially of knowing that is hardly primordial. It is no accident that the *first* part of *Insight*⁴⁷ is wholly preoccupied with an understanding of the subject, which functions coterminously with existing⁴⁸ knowledge; epistemology, the subject-object problem, is introduced only later, in the second part of his discussion.⁴⁹ As an alternative to the subject-as-object position, Lonergan opts for a peculiar 'basis,' one (as I alluded to earlier) that moves, is energetic, is participially constituting. Needless to say, it always moves relative to, and because of, 'something else,' that something else I have taken the liberty to identify with Heidegger's Being and Taylor's notion of the background.

The functional primacy that Lonergan accords to this dimension (the thinking of subject) invites an understanding of it in terms of a contingent primordially. 'Contingent' because the moving viewpoint is not only dependent on, but also embedded in, a background of meaning for its meaning (hence *embodied* agency); 'primordial' because saying the former is to involve oneself automatically, even if reluctantly, in the processes of thought. Oddly enough, then, to speak of a *contingent* primordially is to speak of a dependent *primordially*, of a beginning which is primal yet born(e) of (by) another.

Lonergan's explicating endeavor, what Paul Ricoeur calls 'the movement of return,'⁵⁰ seeks to disentangle subjectivity from ontologized

concepts of subject, that is, subject-as-object), 'consciousness,' 'self,' 'operator,' 'conscious being,' 'the moving viewpoint.'

⁴⁷ *Insight*, CWL 3 27-340.

⁴⁸ Lonergan aims to elucidate the 'nature of' knowledge, not its existence; that for him is, accordingly, a given. See *Insight*, CWL 3 11. For an understanding of the 'nature of' see *Insight*, CWL 3 60-62.

⁴⁹ *Insight*, CWL 3 343-409.

⁵⁰ Paul Ricoeur, "The Task of Hermeneutics," *Paul Ricoeur: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 59.

bases. This deconstructive component of his thought relocates the discourse on subjectivity to its proper source. At the risk of sounding grossly redundant, it is tantamount to foregrounding an aspect of the background that will always remain an aspect of the background.⁵¹ It is not to mistake, as some have thought, the explicitation for the aspect or, what is worse, the background itself. Indeed, the purpose for the activity is to direct attention to what *is* background, whether aspectual or not, in order to foreground that background more attentively, intelligently, reasonably, and, yes, more responsibly. And for Lonergan, "There's something liberating about that."⁵²

4. CONCLUSION

In many ways the foregoing has been a silent discussion with William J. Richardson who, at the conclusion of his scintillating paper delivered at the Lonergan Congress (1970), asks: "What would happen if Fr. Lonergan *did* take account of the Being-question as Heidegger poses it? Would such a stance impose any essential changes in his thought? Would it expose it to a new light that might disclose in it a new depth?"⁵³ Richardson's flirtatious insinuation that it might has surfaced in the course of my open discussion with Charles Taylor. The reason why Taylor interests me is because he summons the case against disengaged subjectivity in such a way that allows for the emergence of authentic, engaged subjectivity. That is, he is not left subjectless. Simultaneously, and in spite of his valid criticisms of disengaged reason, which I have here closely aligned with

⁵¹ This is a modification of Fred Lawrence's statement that the background dimension of consciousness or, what amounts to the same thing, self-presence, "can never be made explicit exhaustively" ("The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Postmodern Concern for the Other," *Theological Studies* 54 [1993] 59). My suggestion is that even this background awareness, when viewed from the perspective of the present discussion, is but an aspect of *the* background, which does not diminish in any foreseeable way Lawrence's insight.

⁵² Lonergan quoting a certain Fr. Heelan in "An Interview with Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J." 213. Of course, attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility correspond to Lonergan's four levels of consciousness.

⁵³ William J. Richardson, "Being for Lonergan: a Heideggerian View," *Language, Truth, and Meaning* 283.

Heidegger's *Destruktion*, Taylor permits a certain level of disengagement, granting it a radically subservient role to that of engagement.

This helps us to resituate Lonergan's concerns in a context which has experienced the dramatic upheaval of 'a notion.' In fact, it helps us to read Lonergan differently. The function of his notion of subject in terms of Heidegger's 'apprehender' is only one example. There is also the case of an expansive shift of horizon, the primacy of the background of Being, on account of which and in relation to which Lonergan's notion functions. 'A new depth' begins to surface. But we would be amiss to think that Lonergan's study of human understanding, with its 'limited scope,' has no redeeming qualities of its own. Lonergan's 'intuition' that certain primordial features, albeit of a relative kind, are intrinsic to human beings strikes me as most compelling. To be aware of background meaningfulness implies an experiencing subject; to think along with background meaningfulness implies an intelligent subject; to discover the truth of background meaningfulness implies a reflective subject; and so on. Finally, Lonergan's appreciation for different patterns of experience provides a glimmer of hope for those who wish "to attain to rational affirmation"⁵⁴ without belittling the fact that "man is not a pure intelligence."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 189. See page 15 above.

⁵⁵ *Insight*, CWL 3 237.

LITERARY THEORY – WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

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I AM NOT a specialist in the subject, but from such reading as I have done in what is called 'literary theory,' I believe it to be in a deplorable and dangerous state, in spite of the impressive talents of its more conspicuous practitioners. The first thing to be done about it, as about most other things, is to ask the right questions. What is literature for? What is the good of literature? What is it that good literature does for us, that bad literature fails to do? The last two questions presuppose a still more fundamental one — what do we mean by 'good'? It is fashionable to say that these questions, and perhaps especially the last, are difficult, even unanswerable; or that everyone's answer to it will be in the final analysis merely a function of her class membership, her early childhood experiences, the prejudices of those who have indoctrinated her, or whatever. I believe all this to be completely wrong, and that the truth of the matter is as follows.

Every single one of us, whether we admit it or not, whether we draw the proper inferences from it or not, has some idea of the fulfilled and realized human life, of the sort of life that it is better to live than not to live. On the other hand, we are all aware that we fall short in one way or another of living such a life ourselves, or of promoting it in other people; or to put it more simply, that we are neither as happy nor as virtuous as we might be. Furthermore, we have the indelible impression, whether we spell out the matter clearly to ourselves or not, that some human societies tend to promote the fulfilled life in their members more than do others. Life in Canada, for some or for most of its citizens, has its drawbacks; but

it is almost certainly better than the life of the average person in Russia at present, let alone in Nazi Germany or the Mongol empire of Genghis Khan. The question 'What is the good of anything?' is the question of how far it contributes to this good life; and this certainly applies to literature. In my own case at least, great literature has contributed an enormous amount to the richness and sweetness of life. The poems of Blake and Herbert, and the novels of Jane Austen, are things without which my life would have been a great deal more restricted and impoverished than it has been. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, certainly applies and has applied to countless other people besides myself.

Why am I, along with a fair number of others, discontented with contemporary literary theory? Mainly because it has no coherent idea of the good; indeed, in its most characteristic modes, it seems destructive not only of all objective norms of value, but of norms of truth as well.¹ The question, surely an urgent one, of why we should keep Molière or Cervantes on our curriculum, rather than any other bit of writing which might be useful in helping people to learn enough French or Spanish to get around, seems seldom to be clear-sightedly asked, let alone satisfactorily answered. Recently I read of a person who maintained that the whole idea of masterpieces of literature, of writings showing great excellence, was a figment of the patriarchy.² Does she really not want to admit that the best of Dryden's poetry is better than the worst of Wither's,³ that Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is finer than anything by Bulwer-Lytton? I regret to say she was a member of a university department of French; and I really wonder what she is doing there, if she thinks that any bit of speaking or writing which purports to be French is as good as any other. And if some are better than others, is it not rather a natural inference from

¹ See also Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) which progresses from a radically subjectivist assessment of the criticism of Shakespeare's sonnets, to a similar account of all cognition and evaluation whatever.

² See Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994) 64, citing Elaine Marks.

³ There is a fine story, for which I regret that I cannot now find the source, that someone during the English Civil War begged that Wither should not be executed, on the ground that, so long as Wither was alive, no one could truly say that he himself was the worst English poet.

this that some are best of all? On my own account, I speak and write French considerably worse than the average seven-year old Quebec schoolboy, let alone Corneille or Flaubert. But if she is right, it appears to follow that I must be wrong in this. Others seem to state or to imply that every cultural or racial group (or perhaps even subgroup or coterie within such groups — once one starts on this way of thinking, where does one stop?) should have its own peculiar standards of excellence. On the view that I have sketched, on the contrary, the answer as to what a masterpiece is, and why masterpieces are masterpieces (as Aristotle would have pointed out, these questions are really the same),⁴ is not far to seek; a masterpiece is a masterpiece because, and insofar as, it contributes greatly to the good life as I have briefly described it.

How can one clarify this notion, of contributing to the good life? It may be helpful to cite some examples. I well remember the first time in my adult life that I read the work of Jane Austen. I had been working rather hard for most of the day, in a library at Cambridge, on a book by a distinguished contemporary philosopher, and by four o'clock in the afternoon I was suffering from a sort of mental cramp. More or less at random — though I think I was influenced marginally by a recollection of how much I had enjoyed having *Pride and Prejudice* read to me some years before — I took *Northanger Abbey* from the shelf, and started to read it. Almost immediately I experienced an extraordinary refreshment of the spirit; Jane Austen's incomparable prose made me feel as though my brain were being skillfully massaged. A few years ago, again, I heard the story of a young man who was studying science at a university. A lecture on Shakespeare was to be given, and he decided to go along, without much enthusiasm, at the insistence of one of his friends. By the end of the lecture he had resolved to devote the rest of his life to the study of Shakespeare. To take a third example, it is one of the most tragic losses from antiquity that we have so little of the poetry of Sappho — whom Plato salutes as 'the tenth muse.' As J. W. Mackail says of the surviving fragments, "We read a few simple words, simply put together; we admire them and pass on; and then we find that there is some witchery in them that makes us go

⁴ *Metaphysics* Z, 17, 1041b 4ff. See also B. Lonergan, *VERBUM: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1968) 15.

back, and again back, and yet again back, to try to find what it is in them that moves us so." All these three cases illustrate the fact that there is a special kind of delight which is given, to some people at least, by the masterpieces of literature; I believe that it is in their capacity to give this sort of delight that their excellence consists. I should say also that someone who has never felt this delight, or can no longer do so, has no business being a teacher of literature.

I have an enormous admiration for the work of Northrop Frye. Yet I think of him as a great man who made at least one very great mistake (Chesterton rightly says that people who never make mistakes never make anything else either). This mistake was in excluding value-judgments from the business of literary criticism. Yet, of course, like every other literary critic worth the name, Frye makes such judgments, makes them constantly, and could not do his work without making them. One of the great merits, in fact, of that truly great book *Anatomy of Criticism*,⁵ is that it removes various obstructions in the way of making sound value-judgments, by providing categories into which writings can be fitted for appropriate evaluation. Evidently, for example, Walter Scott has very many failings, if you take him as a novelist in the manner of George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, or Antonia Byatt. His merits can only be appreciated if you put him in another category which gives you different expectations; a category that Frye labels 'romances.' What is really at issue in the evaluation of works and authors comes out very well in the passage where Frye remarks that the critic will soon find by experience that Milton's poetry is more rewarding to work with than that of Blackmore; it is in the liability of people in many circumstances and from many backgrounds to react in this kind of way, that the superiority in value of Milton to Blackmore consists.⁶ Such 'rewardingness' is the very essence of literary value.

⁵ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁶ Barbara Smith is of course quite right that there are reasons why one might want to study the work of Blackmore, and I suppose that there are no compelling grounds for denying that studying it for some of these reasons might be regarded as a sort of literary criticism. But this is to miss Frye's point, which is that as a poet Milton is rewarding of more attention than Blackmore is, and that this is essential to the fact that he is the better poet, and consequently more worthy of the attention of the majority of critics. (There is an important critical essay to be written on just why Blackmore is a worse poet than Milton.)

I have said that the goodness or greatness of a work of art is a matter of its capacity to give satisfaction; and I have tried to describe, by means of a few examples, the kind of satisfaction involved. Can we determine more about its nature? As I have argued at some length elsewhere,⁷ aesthetic satisfaction is the sort of satisfaction that we get through extension and clarification of our consciousness. Rather as some physical activities satisfy by exercising our bodies, works of art satisfy by exercising our souls or conscious subjectivities.⁸ (It is the essential difference between art and entertainment that mere entertainment rewards us without demanding this kind of exercise. "Virginia Woolf? But you can't read her except when you're feeling perfectly fresh!")⁹ Now for all the enormous variety of human consciousness, it seems to me that it is worthwhile, in this context at least, to distinguish four aspects of it.¹⁰

First, there is the undergoing of experience and feeling, and the imagination that repeats and savors it. Keats's *St Agnes Eve*, and Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, are notable for the vividness with which they bring scenes before our eyes, and Keats's poem exercises our tactile and gustatory imaginations into the bargain. Another crucial aspect of consciousness is our capacity to envisage patterns, to create hypotheses, to find unity within ranges of data. Coleridge writes of the 'esemplastic imagination,'¹¹ that which makes one out of many. In a well-crafted novel, epic, or lyric poem, we feel that there is a reason for everything to be there — that it is not just 'one damn thing after another'; style, content,

⁷ Hugo Meynell, *The Nature of Aesthetic Value* (London and Albany: MacMillans and SUNY Press, 1986). I believe that the book was killed stone-dead by its title, which should have been, as Northrop Frye remarked, what it was originally intended to be, *The Good of Art*.

⁸ If some people's withers are wrung by talk of 'souls' I can only reply that the obvious alternative, 'minds,' may be somewhat misleading. Dickens's *Bleak House* or Spenser's *Prothalamion* do not exercise quite the same aspects of our consciousness, at least in quite the same way, as crossword puzzles, or logical or mathematical exercises.

⁹ This example is from Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932).

¹⁰ For magisterial discussions of these aspects of consciousness, see B. J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); and *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971).

¹¹ *Biographia Literaria* (London: J. M. Dent, 1956) chapter 13.

and imagery reinforce and enhance one another, rather than all pulling in different directions. To judge appropriately of what is true or good, yet a third capacity is needed. It is insufficient merely to attend to experience, and to hypothesize and envisage possibilities; we have to determine that some possibility is probably or certainly so in the light of our experience. Fourthly and lastly, it is one thing to determine for adequate reason what is good; it is another to decide to act accordingly. So, for the purposes of our exposition, I propose that, following Bernard Lonergan, we divide consciousness into the four elements of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision; and say that we are attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible to the extent that we exercise these capacities.

Now works of art or literature, as such, do not tell us what is the case, or order us to do anything. Sir Philip Sidney was wise to say that 'the poet never affirmeth'; and he might have added with equal justice that the poet never commandeth either. (At least, when a novelist or a poet gets didactic or preachy, we usually infer that she is not at her best — one thinks of George Eliot or D. H. Lawrence, or some of W. H. Auden's 'committed' poems of the 1930s). But judgment and decision, even if they are not exercised (except in a certain limited way)¹² by literature, are certainly often clarified by it; and we are given the experience of what it is to judge or decide. Conrad's *Lord Jim* is in effect a study of the nature and effects of one momentary but fateful decision. I should say that it is the first two aspects of consciousness, experience and understanding, attentiveness and intelligence, which are not only clarified but exercised by literature and the arts in general. Education in the arts is an important part, perhaps the most important part, of the humane education which does not so much tell us what is true and good, what it is right for us to believe or do, as exercise our minds and souls so that we can freely decide these matters for ourselves. So the arts and literature, while not as such directly telling us what is so or what is right, expand our horizons so that we are the more capable of determining these things for ourselves. To take what may be a rather contentious issue for some people, the point of a humane education is not to indoctrinate us with even such worthy causes

¹² There is the story of the man who rushed onto the stage during a performance of *Othello*, crying "Don't, you great black fool; don't."

as feminism and anti-racism, but to expand our horizons in such a way that we are able to apprehend the real excellence of these causes, and embrace them as a consequence of this, at the same time avoiding the various intellectual and moral abuses which may have got attached to them.¹³ So the relation between cultivation of literature and the arts on the one hand, and knowing the truth and acting rightly on the other, though indirect, is very close; the arts satisfy by exercising the experience and understanding, which are necessary conditions of our habitually judging truly and acting rightly. They enhance the means by which we tend to get to know what is true and good. This confirms the feeling that most people have, that the arts are no trivial matter; and that, as F. R. Leavis said, where the arts are not cultivated, a culture is sick. It is no wonder at this rate that oppressive regimes tend to exercise strict censorship over the arts;¹⁴ the more people are encouraged to be attentive and intelligent, as they are by good art and literature, the more difficult it is to stop them from being reasonable (about what is true and right) and responsible (about acting accordingly).

But somebody will say, "Haven't the postmodernists shown us that we can have no coherent idea of 'truth' that isn't just 'truth for' someone, let alone any coherent idea of 'goodness' that isn't totally subjective?" However, the whole force of this claim depends on at least the postmodernists or their mentors, if no-one else, having said for good reason what was likely to be true, rather than just true-for-them. After all, why should you or I accept any doctrine that was just (say) true-for-Marx or true-for-Darwin? And for that matter, is it merely true-for-me that Marx proclaimed the imminence of proletarian revolution, or Darwin the evolution of species by random mutation and natural selection; whereas it might be equally true for you that Marx was a staunch defender of capitalism, or that Darwin spent most of his life as a fundamentalist country vicar?

¹³ For the abuses, both intellectual and moral, which have attached themselves to the noble cause of feminism, see Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge, *Professing Feminism: Cautionary Tales from the Strange World of Women's Studies* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); and Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism?*

¹⁴ I do not wish to rule out the possibility that some censorship, however regretfully, may have to be exercised even by the most beneficent regimes.

Thomas McCarthy has written of "the relentless detranscendentalization of reason and decentering of the rational subject by Marx and Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud, historicism and pragmatism."¹⁵ What is to be done is simply to retranscendentalize reason and center the rational subject. But how is this possible? A first step is to note, that without assuming that reason is to some extent at least 'transcendental' in just the sense at issue, you cannot at once be consistent, and take any of these great thinkers seriously. For to take them seriously is to assume that they were able to use their reasoning powers to get at the truth about things, or at least to get closer to the truth about things than their comparatively benighted predecessors and opponents. Darwin used his reasoning powers on a mass of evidence, to show how modern animals and plants have evolved from primitive forms by mutation and natural selection; and we all have important lessons to learn from him about how the evolutionary history of our own species affects our dispositions to thought, speech and behavior. But unless reason is sufficiently 'transcendent' of our inherited and acquired biological routines to get at what is the case, not only about what is immediately relevant to our survival, but about other matters as well, Darwinism inevitably falls to the ground together with the rest of science.

The moral applies equally to Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. On a 'hard' interpretation, the pretension of human beings to rationality, and the knowledge of the truth about the real world in which it issues, are all fatally compromised by the vicissitudes of our potty training, our class position as *petit-bourgeois rentiers*, or our will-to-power or that of our mistresses or masters. This 'does for' the claims of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud to speak the truth about things, or even to come nearer to doing so than their predecessors, just as much as it 'does for' those of anyone else; which makes it absurd for them to be taken seriously as critics of any position whatever, let alone 'masters of suspicion.' And the same goes for historicists and pragmatists. What is the status of the proposition that a thoroughgoing historicism, or a thoroughgoing pragmatism, is true? Is it simply a function of the historical situation of her who makes it, or an

¹⁵ David Cozens Hoy and Thomas McCarthy, *Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 7-8.

expression of what she is up to? Or does it stake out a claim about how things really are? In the former case, the contradictory might just as well be true for someone who is in a different historical situation, or who is up to something else; but the latter is incompatible with a thoroughgoing historicism or pragmatism. On a 'soft' interpretation, however, there is no doubt, to my mind at least, that each of these great thinkers has a lot that is valuable to teach us — about the way in which early influences upon us, the position of our group in relation to economy and society, and our struggle to be able to dispose of ourselves and others, affect the way we think, speak, and act. But reason must at least to some degree be 'transcendent,' so far as it allows us to find out what is absolutely so, and not merely so for people with our particular constitution and place in the world. As for the 'decentering of the rational subject,' some subjects have to be 'centered' enough to talk reasonably about this 'decenteredness' for us to have any reason to take it seriously.

There is a little essay by C.S. Lewis entitled "Bulverism; or, The Foundation of Twentieth-Century Thought," which is not as well-known as it ought to be. The turning-point of Ezekiel Bulver's life was an incident which occurred when he was five years old. He heard his father trying to prove to his mother that vertically opposite angles were equal; but his mother won the argument by asserting, "You only say that because you are a man." Bulver realized that he would never again have to take the trouble of looking at the soundness of an argument in its own right; all he had to do was to advert to the circumstances or background of the person who was presenting it.¹⁶ Freud and Marx at their worst are probably the most notable of Bulver's disciples.

To lay to rest the bogey of relativism, it is not quite enough to dilate on the egregious absurdities which are to be strictly inferred from it; one has to say a little about the elements of epistemology and metaphysics — about how we get to know, and what 'reality' must be, in very general terms, by virtue of the fact that we can thus get to know it. Epistemology is supposed to be dogged by the problem of infinite regress. You may claim to set up principles by means of which people can get to know what

¹⁶ See C. S. Lewis, *Undeceptions*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1971) 223-228.

is the case about things. But on what are these principles themselves to be based? And what is the basis of that? And so on, and so on. It may be said that experience and logic alone will get you to the truth about the world; but every instructed philosopher knows that experience and logic alone will get you almost nowhere. From the fact that you see a red patch, it can be validly inferred that you see a colored patch; but you can hardly erect the whole of scientific and commonsense knowledge on such a foundation as that. Fortunately, the answer, though supposed to be formidably difficult, is in fact quite simple. The correct epistemology is founded on the fact that it is self-destructive to deny that one engages in certain basic mental operations, which happen to be those that I have already mentioned. Suppose I say that one does not tend to get at the truth by being attentive to experience, intelligent in hypothesizing, and reasonable in judgment. Either I make my denial for good reason, or I do not. If I do not make my denial for good reason, there is no point in taking any notice of it. Then suppose I do make my denial for good reason. But what good reason could there be, except that I or my authority have attended to the relevant experiences, have understood a number of possible explanations for them, and have judged to be the case that possibility which appears to be best confirmed by the evidence of experience? In fact, one can only have any basis for the denial that this is the way *par excellence* of getting at the truth, by implicitly presupposing that it is after all that way.¹⁷ Yet one can hardly reasonably argue that one does not tend to get at the truth so far as one is reasonable in the making of one's judgments.

But what about the gap between what anyone happens to judge to be so, and what is really the case? The answer to this is that we have no coherent idea of 'reality' or 'the actual world,' except as that which true judgments are about, and well-founded judgments — that is, those that are attentively, intelligently, and reasonably arrived at — tend to be about. Short of this assumption, the distinction between reality on the one hand, and mere appearance or illusion on the other, lacks any purchase on our thought and language. What merely appears to be so, is what more far-reaching attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness would find out not to be so. (The sun appears to move round a stationary earth, but

¹⁷ See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 16-17.

the truth of the matter is rather that the earth moves round the sun; if one says the bookie appears to be honest, the implication is that a more attentive, intelligent, and reasonable scrutiny of his credentials might tend to show that he is not.) Someone may say that this is a merely Western, 'Enlightenment,' rationalistic idea of 'reality.' But this is not so. Western views of reality, like other views of reality, are the result of taking attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness (let us call the three together 'rationality') just so far; even if the West has taken this process outstandingly far in the areas of the physical sciences, there are other aspects of things, perhaps, about which the West might have something to learn from other cultures. And how do we even know that there are other cultures than our own from the beliefs and assumptions of which we might learn? Simply by being rational with regard to the rationality, or lack of it, of people of other cultures, on the basis of the evidence provided to our senses by their words, actions, writings, and monuments. They no doubt have ideological distortions in their mental processes which may mean that they have something to learn from us; but just the same applies to us with respect to them. What appears to us to be so as a result of having taken rationality as far as we have is not the same as what would appear to us to be so if we had taken it indefinitely far. And the same applies to what is believed by other cultures; one would expect *a priori* that each of us had to learn from the others. They will almost certainly have had experiences, and exercised their intellectual and reasonable powers, in ways that we have not.

What, then, is the good of good literature? It has, it seems to me, both an intrinsic and an extrinsic value. Its intrinsic value is a matter of its contributing to the satisfaction to be got out of life; but its instrumental value is in limbering up the mental capacities which are a necessary means for getting to know what is true and what is good. I have argued elsewhere that literature is, as a matter of fact, of value in proportion to (a) the ingenuity of its manipulation of the verbal medium; (b) the seriousness of its theme; (c) its representation of actual or possible situations; and (d) its overall unity in variety of substance and effect. These properties, I would maintain, are causally related to the disposition

to give aesthetic satisfaction which is the essence of goodness in literature. Let me provide some very brief examples.

(a) Relish of skill in the medium of words is certainly conveyed by Marlowe's line in *Edward II*, "With hair that gilds the water as it glides," with its deft juxtaposition of 'gilds' and 'glides.' A contemporary example is provided by Alice Kaplan when she at once describes and expresses the feeling for words that she acquired as a child. "'Oy' was in the same category as swear words, satisfying and ugly."¹⁸ Of her mother's pet phrases, "the jig is up!" and "Home again, Finnegan," she remarks how much she enjoyed the sounds, the click of the words over her palate, in 'jig' and 'Finnegan.'¹⁹ Of the line in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, "Or seemed fair, wall'd in with eagle's wings," Peter Quennell writes: "Only Marlowe could have condensed so much melody and movement into a succession of eight simple words";²⁰ though perhaps there is more romantic sweetness in Blake's bow-shaped line from *The Book of Thel*, "To fade away like morning beauty from her mortal day." In a passage from Shakespeare's *All's Well*, a simple confession is enormously enhanced in impact by the clever verbal maneuvering which precedes it: "Then I confess it,/Here on my knee, before high heaven and thee,/That, before thee, and next unto high heaven,/I love your son." Of Cedric Mulliner's indispensable secretary, P. G. Wodehouse wrote: "Her mouth was firm, her chin resolute. Mussolini might have fired her, if at the top of his form, but I can think of nobody else capable of the feat." One of the burglars who broke into Osbert Mulliner's flat was "a man of few words, and those somewhat impeded by cold potatoes and bread."²¹

(b) I imagine that few writers, in English or in any other language, have excelled Wodehouse in his gift for manipulating the medium of words. But it is the criterion of moral significance which makes one certain that he would never be regarded as among the world's very greatest liter-

¹⁸ Kaplan, *French Lessons: A Memoir* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 5.

¹⁹ Kaplan, *French Lessons* 8.

²⁰ Peter Quennell, *Shakespeare: A Biography* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1963) 46.

²¹ P. G. Wodehouse, *The World of Mr. Mulliner* (New York: Taplinger, 1972) 166, 189.

ary artists. (This was why Leavis, who exaggerated the relative importance of moral significance, made such a fuss when Wodehouse was awarded an honorary degree by the university of Oxford.) The criterion of moral significance should not be misunderstood. For much of the nineteenth century, Mozart's music was underestimated because people could not get it into their heads that seriousness in the relevant sense is not incompatible with wit, finesse, or delicacy of touch; and that it is by no means to be identified with heavy solemnity. The sort of seriousness that is at issue is exemplified just as much by the Fool in *King Lear* as by the Duke of Gloucester or the King himself. Lytton Strachey and Frank Kermode may have been wrong — personally, I think they were — when they reproached Shakespeare for turning away from the grave moral issues which had preoccupied him in writing the great tragedies, when he came to compose *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.²² Yet I think nearly every one would agree that, if indeed the 'reflective comedies' lack moral significance, this militates against their supreme greatness. If *The Importance of Being Earnest* is not so important a work as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, for all its far greater consistency, elegance, and finish, this is because of Faustus's more exalted theme. (Letitia Meynell has complained that I sell Wilde short in saying this; but it is notable that she supports her contention with the claim that I regard *Earnest* as sheer verbal-pyrotechnics, and miss what she sees as profound social commentary.)

(c) Literature satisfies largely by bringing out vividly what a typical situation or train of events in human life is like. This is what Aristotle appears to have meant by *mimesis*. The first line of Marlowe that I quoted, while at once ingenious and beautiful as a sheer pattern of words, intensifies rather than obscures one's visual impression of the "lovely boy in Dian's shape." On the other hand, if F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot are right that in Swinburne's verse it is merely the words as such which give the thrill, and not the words as evocative of what is other than themselves,²³ then this is surely a limitation in that poet. In Kaplan's autobiography, we are told that her grandmother's 'r' had a lilt that was "more of a gargle

²² See F. Kermode, 'The Mature Comedies,' in ed. J. R. Brown and B. Harris *Early Shakespeare* (London: Edward Arnold, 1961) 213.

²³ See also Leavis, *Revaluation* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936) 240.

than a roll. There was throat in her voice, too, 'acch' sounds and spit."²⁴ A feat of mimesis which also excels in respect of moral seriousness is her observation, all the more compassionate for being scrupulously unsentimental,²⁵ of the same old lady at the very end of her life as a psychological wreck, finally overwhelmed by memory of the horrifying events of her childhood. Both mimesis and moral significance, again, seem at issue in the following remark by Iris Murdoch: "The most essential and fundamental aspect of culture is the study of literature, since this is an education in how to picture and understand human situations. We are men [sic] and we are moral agents before we are scientists, and the place of science in life must be discussed in words. This is why it is and always will be more important to know about Shakespeare than to know about any scientist."²⁶

(d) In respect of unity within variety of substance and effect, the Kaplan autobiography is not outstandingly excellent — why should it be? — but certainly the style, content, and overall structure are well-suited to each other, and to the chronicle of the author's growth to intellectual and personal maturity which is the basic theme of the book. Coleridge is surely right in saying that nothing in a work of literature can permanently please, which does not have a good reason for being as it is.²⁷ Richard Strauss, who was one of the greatest of all masters of orchestration, is said once to have asked a young composer why he used trombones in his score, and to have got the answer, "Everyone uses them nowadays." The point in this case, as Bernard Lonergan would have said, is that there was no point. The line, superb in itself, which I quoted above from Marlowe's *Dido*, is utterly inappropriate to its speaker's character and situation; Ganymede is whining to Jupiter about Juno's jealousy. Eliot remarks of much indifferent eighteenth-century verse, that the matter and the

²⁴ Kaplan, *French Lessons*, 94.

²⁵ One may contrast the worst excesses of Dickens's treatment of women, like that of Little Em'ly in *David Copperfield*.

²⁶ *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) 34. I owe this citation to a paper by Thomas de Koninck, "The Humanities and the Formation of Persons." She adds "if there is a 'Shakespeare of science' his name is Aristotle." Several books could be written by way of commentary on this extraordinary remark.

²⁷ *Biographia*, chapter 14.

manner seem constantly surprised at one another; there could hardly be a more striking illustration of his point than Erasmus Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*, a treatise on biology written in heroic couplets. (One could get rather a similar effect by writing a detective thriller in the manner of Simenon in Racinian alexandrines.)²⁸

Percy Lubbock declared that the intention of a novelist should be expressible in a single short phrase; if it could not be so expressed, it was no fit subject for a novel.²⁹ The subject of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* is just that; though the two sisters and their adventures represent the two humors somewhat too schematically by the great novelist's later standards. Darcy and Elizabeth, of course, stand for *Pride and Prejudice* in the novel of that name; Lady Catherine de Burgh exemplifies excess of aristocratic pride, which is implicitly rebuked by the middle-class decency of the Gardiners; while in Mr. Bennet Elizabeth's liveliness has become detached and morally sterile, and Elizabeth's own ready enthusiasm for and ultimate disappointment in Wickham show the limitations and pitfalls of her original moral attitude.³⁰ Gilbert Ryle once brilliantly remarked that *Emma* might have been called 'Influence and Interference'; Mr. Knightley's counsel releases in Emma what she ultimately recognizes to be the best possibilities in herself, whereas Emma's own officious attentions to Harriet Smith appear more and more clearly disastrous to all concerned. So the central moral issue gives shape to Jane Austen's great novels, without impugning, indeed while enhancing, the exuberance and refinement of language and the just representation of character and situation.

Where the control by moral theme is too confining and constricting, as it seems to be in Dickens's *Hard Times*,³¹ a novel is clearly the worse for it. At the other extreme, in Dickens's early novels, what central theme

²⁸ Max Beerbohm wittily exploits this sort of inappropriateness in *Zuleika Dobson*, when the heroine, asked why she speaks in the curious manner that she does, says she picked it up from someone called Max Beerbohm whom she once met at dinner.

²⁹ Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965) 41-42.

³⁰ See A. Walton Litz, *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (London: 1965) 105.

³¹ 'Dombey and Son,' in *Dickens: Modern Judgments*, ed. A. E. Dyson (London: MacMillans, 1968) 172.

there is is apt to serve merely as a pretext for felicities of language and characterization. This applies up to *Martin Chuzzlewit*, of which the subject was supposed to be selfishness; but this does not really shape the novel — which is memorable for the structurally incidental Pecksniff and Mrs. Gamp. From *Dombey and Son* onwards, however, the excellence of Dickens's novels becomes more a matter of an organic unity of structure, language, representation, and moral point which is comparable with that of a mature Shakespeare play. In *Dombey* itself, as Kathleen Tillotson has pointed out, every character, though convincing and vivid in her or his own right,³² is related at not more than one remove to Dombey and his family pride.³³ The oppressive miasma of Chancery plays a similar role in *Bleak House*. What applies to the novel applies as much to the epic. It has been well said of the *Iliad*, that the theme is not the Trojan War as such, of which after all it chronicles only a small part; but what is announced at the very beginning — a quarrel between two men, and the fact that it can bring death and destruction on so many others. Similarly, the *Odyssey* is informed by the theme that injustice is hateful to the gods, and will ultimately be punished.³⁴

In conclusion, what is wrong with contemporary literary theory is lack of an adequate epistemological and axiological basis. What has to be done about it is the provision and vindication of the correct epistemology, and the development from there of a coherent account of why and in what respects good literature is valuable, and why we would be immeasurably worse off without it. This I have tried to provide, necessarily briefly and sketchily in so short a space.

³² Dr. Leavis's tendency to blindness in this direction is illustrated by his overvaluation of *Hard Times* in *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936).

³³ *Dombey's* daughter Florence, who has been justly described as a gap surrounded by admiring characters, is an unfortunate exception.

³⁴ See H. D. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951) 47.

BOOK REVIEW

Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan. By Richard M. Liddy. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, A Michael Glazier Book, 1993. xii + 225 pages.

CHARLES TAYLOR, in his essay "Overcoming Epistemology," claims the epistemological tradition has understood knowledge as "a correct representation of an independent reality. In its original form, it saw knowledge as the inner depiction of an outer reality." For Taylor, this account of human knowing is problematic at best. One must abandon this representational approach to human knowing. "Instead of searching for an impossible foundational justification of knowledge or hoping to achieve total reflexive clarity about the bases of our beliefs, we would now conceive this self-understanding as awareness about the limits and conditions of our knowing" In other words, to overcome epistemology means one must move out of the counterposition that knowing is analogous to looking, or picture thinking. Conversely, Richard Liddy in his book *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan*, has given us a wonderful account of someone, namely Bernard Lonergan, who has already overcome the epistemological form of picture thinking that Taylor finds so counterproductive.

For those of us who have worked long and hard in trying to understand what Lonergan is doing in *Insight*, and to avoid the trap of associating knowing with looking, it is refreshing to have a book that gives an account of Lonergan's own struggle in trying to overcome inadequate accounts of human knowing. In short, Liddy does an admirable job in delineating Lonergan's own intellectual conversion by drawing a portrait of a real person who is struggling to make sense of himself and his intellectual milieu.

Liddy sets the tone for the book and for Lonergan's intellectual journey by recounting a story from Lonergan's youth. "When I was a boy, I remember being surprised by a companion who assured me that air was real. Astounded, I said, 'No, it's just nothing.' He said, 'There's something there all right. Shake your hand and you will feel it.' So I shook my hand, felt something, and concluded to my amazement the air was real." Liddy points out, as with Augustine, it took Lonergan years to figure out what is meant by the real, and how we come to know it.

One of the real merits of the book is the historical manner in which Liddy lays out Lonergan's intellectual development. In fact, Part One of the book is entitled "The Way to Intellectual Conversion." Here, Liddy does a good job of articulating the intellectual climate in which Lonergan found himself during the various stages of his intellectual and spiritual formation. Just as important, Liddy presents the texts and thinkers that significantly shaped Lonergan's intellectual journey. For example, during Lonergan's period of philosophical studies at Heythrop College he read H.W.B. Joseph's monumental work *An Introduction to Logic*. At that time Lonergan was immersed in a stifling Suarezian scholasticism and Joseph's book helped Lonergan to ask the basic question in philosophy, 'What on earth are they doing?' or, more accurately, 'What on earth are we doing?' In addition to Joseph's work on logic, during Lonergan's third year of philosophy he read John Henry Newman's *Grammar of Assent*: "My fundamental mentor and guide has been John Henry Newman's *Grammar of Assent*. ... I was not satisfied with the philosophy that was being taught and found Newman's presentation to be something that fitted in with the way I knew things. It was from that kernel that I went on to different authors."

Newman's influence on Lonergan's thinking first appears in articles Lonergan wrote for a journal at Heythrop College titled "The Blandyke Journal." One of Lonergan's early *Blandyke Papers*, "The Form of Mathematical Inference," shows that Lonergan like Newman "is very interested in determining what happens in the world of logical and mathematical thinking." The third of the *Blandyke Papers*, "True Judgment and Science," contains the most ample references to Newman. "In it Lonergan vindicates Newman's contention that we can know with certainty more than we can formally or scientifically prove. In other words, science and logic

are not the ordinary human criteria of truth." Liddy points out that in Lonergan's later writings, Newman is not quoted a great deal. Nonetheless, Newman is there in Lonergan's focus on intentionality analysis, the concrete operations of human consciousness, as primarily important as opposed to what scientists might say about knowledge.

If Newman's works helped to shape Lonergan's understanding of the facts of consciousness, it was J. A. Stewart's book *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas* that showed Lonergan that his so called 'nominalism' was in opposition not to intelligence, but the role ascribed to universal concepts. Lonergan read Stewart's book during the summer of 1930 after he had finished his studies in London and returned to Montreal to teach at Loyola College. Stewart maintained that many scholars had missed Plato's point on the theory of ideas, or forms. They had failed to ask the basic question: "what human and psychological experience was Plato talking about?" Stewart claimed that Plato's *eidei* are points of view "from which the sensible world is interpreted. They structure human questioning in its dynamic search for an understanding of this world." In short, it was Plato, refracted through Stewart, that taught Lonergan that every question if formulated correctly implies an answer.

*Romae vobis propitius ero.*¹ Lonergan attributes his intellectual conversion to the course he took at the Gregorian University in Rome on the Incarnate Word from Bernard Lemming, S.J. According to Liddy, the core of Lonergan's intellectual breakthrough was that Aquinas's Aristotelian metaphysical system was really "the objective 'heuristic' framework for the acts he had all along been so intent on coming to know." One dimension of the system which he came to understand through Lemming's course was the real distinction between essence and existence. Lonergan uses for the first time the term intellectual conversion in reference to this course on Christ. "I had the intellectual conversion myself when in doing theology I saw that you can't have one person in two natures in Christ unless there is a real distinction between the two natures

¹ The Latin phrase comes from a letter that Lonergan wrote to his provincial on how happy he was to be in Rome. "It was a magnificent vote of confidence which, combined with the great encouragement I had from Fr. Smeaton after years of painful introversion and with the words over the high altar in the church of St. Ignatius here *Romae vobis propitius ero* [at Rome I will be favorable to you], was consolation indeed."

and something else that is one." This distinction bears directly on terms of the church's doctrine: how important is it to maintain a real, not just mental, distinction between the humanity and divinity of the person of Jesus Christ? For Lonergan, the significance of making such distinctions lies in the fact that the doctrines of the church "reflect the understanding and judgments of the human family. They mediate our knowledge of reality. ... We exist, not just as infants in a world of immediacy, but in the far vaster world mediated by meaning."

The first part of Liddy's book, which is the longest of the three sections, ends with the aforementioned experience. Part Two is a short account of the beginnings of what Liddy terms Lonergan's "Early Expressions of Intellectual conversion." Here we encounter Lonergan's work on Thomas: *Grace and Freedom* and the *Verbum Articles*. In Part Three Liddy takes us through Lonergan's "Radical Intellectual Conversion." What Liddy means by this phrase is Lonergan's focus on modern scientific consciousness. According to Liddy, Lonergan's turn to the methodologies of science was important for two reasons. First, one could not just simply ignore the presence of science in the modern world. "It [the scientific revolution] outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and the Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of medieval Christendom." Secondly, science had broken with Aristotelian metaphysics. As a result, science "took over completely the theoretical treatment of the sensible world. It was a revolution in the world of theory." According to Liddy, Lonergan found this theoretical revolution in science significant because it prepared the way for what Lonergan calls the third stage of meaning: "In a third stage the modes of common sense and theory remain, science asserts its autonomy from philosophy, and there occur philosophies that leave theory to science and take their stand on interiority."

Anyone who has truly struggled through, and agonized over, the first five chapters of *Insight* knows well how Lonergan struggled to appropriate the true nature of science. Liddy points out that Lonergan understood Augustine's intellectual breakthrough in the spring of 386 as similar to the project of modern science. "St. Augustine of Hippo narrates that it took him years to make the discovery that the name, real, might have a different connotation from the name body. ...[I]t was left to

twentieth-century physicists to envisage the possibility that the objects of their science were to be reached only by severing the umbilical cord that tied them to the maternal imagination of man."

Liddy ends his book on a personal note. He gives an account of his own struggle with intellectual conversion. At the time of his conversion Liddy was writing a dissertation on Susan Langer. As he puts the issue:

As I wrestled with Lonergan's thought, I slowly came to realize that not only was there a difference between Lonergan's view of human knowing and Langer's; there was also a difference between Lonergan's view ... and my own. Indeed, that ... view — in spite of years of scholastic philosophy —

was naive realism. For Liddy, the issue was not between Lonergan and Langer but his conflict between his activities of understanding and judging and the 'naive views of knowing.'

Liddy's book is indeed a valuable addition to Lonergan studies, because he does more than just provide the myriad sources of Lonergan's intellectual conversion. It is an encounter with the flesh and blood person of Bernard Lonergan who doubts and struggles, but is at all times unfailingly honest in his desire to understand. In addition, one of the true values of the book is it provides a historical context to both *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. This is important because there exists the tendency to assume that these great works just appeared one day, instead of understanding them as the results of a long and arduous intellectual journey, a journey that Lonergan never abandoned.

I have only one minor criticism and it arises from Liddy's account of his own intellectual conversion. "I was wrestling with what Lonergan meant. That was less clear. But I sensed through the darkness that there was 'something there.' I was aware of the Lonergan *system* (my emphasis) ..." It is this use of the word *system* I find somewhat problematic. In this climate of postmodernity and its critique of epistemology and metaphysics as cover stories for various forms of power and oppression, the use of the word *system* to describe Lonergan's work makes it easy to dismiss the radical nature of Lonergan's cognitional theory, a theory that takes seriously the concerns of postmodernity, the negativity, the aleatory, and the discontinuity of human living and knowing, without capitulating

to its dangerous excesses. If Richard Liddy meant the term somewhat ironically, then I am humbled by my own lack of insight. If, however, no irony was intended then perhaps other terms should have been used, such as systematic account, or Lonergan's methodology. Having said that, however, Liddy's book remains an excellent propaedeutic for those wishing to immerse themselves in the Lonergan of *Insight* and *Method In Theology*, because it situates these texts as the fruits of Lonergan's own intellectual conversion.

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