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THE REALIST RESPONSE TO IDEALISM IN ENGLAND AND LONERGAN'S CRITICAL REALISM

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IT WAS SUGGESTED by Hermann Lötze that a philosophical position is an attempt to justify a fundamental view of things adopted in early life.¹ While this is probably not true for every major philosopher, it seems it is true often enough. In Lonergan studies, certainly, the research of Richard Liddy, Michael Shute, Joseph Fitzpatrick, William Mathews, and others, has shown that some fundamental components of Lonergan's mature views were assembled, although not integrated, very early in his career, in the late 1920s and early 1930s. For example, traces can be found in Lonergan's mature thought of early encounters with the writings of G. K. Chesterton, Matthew Arnold, and John Henry Newman, of Suarez, Plato, and Augustine, of J. S. Mill, Patrick Coffey, and H. W. B. Joseph. Investigation of these traces continues to throw brighter and sometimes new light on Lonergan's ultimate position. My own study of the influence of the Oxford don J. A. Stewart, whose book *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas* had a strong impact on the young Lonergan, has tended to confirm my view that, when applied to Lonergan's case, Lötze's observation

¹Quoted by J. B. Baillie in *Contemporary British Philosophy: Personal Statements* (First Series), ed. J. H. Muirhead (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1924), 15. I am grateful to Michael Vertin of the University of Toronto for his helpful comments on a previous draft of this essay.

should be taken seriously.² A good deal of light, it appears, may be shed on Lonergan's mature thought by a study of early influences.

The formative influence of the figures mentioned above has been acknowledged by Lonergan himself either in informal recollections or in his formal writings. Investigators of the influence of these thinkers on Lonergan may proceed with confidence that they will discover something which sheds new or brighter light on his position. However, when the young Lonergan read these authors he was breathing the air of an intellectual atmosphere constituted by the philosophical perplexities of a particular place and time. It is fair to suppose that the exigent young Lonergan, perhaps as anxious then as he was later to meet the demands of his times,³ read these authors as possible contributors to the resolution of problems that pervaded the atmosphere at that time. If this supposition is granted, it is reasonable to expect that still further light will be shed on Lonergan's mature position by shifting the balance of attention from the early influence on him of particular figures and the ideas for which they are now known, to the early influence on him of the problematic atmosphere within which those thinkers wrote or were being read and within which he turned to those figures for enlightenment and assistance. In this essay I shall shift the balance of attention for the moment to the intellectual atmosphere within which Lonergan's own questions arose and approached precise articulation.

My general aim, then, is to contribute to the understanding of Lonergan's mature philosophical position by seeking harbingers in the intellectual drama being played out in England during the late 1920s when Lonergan took up residence at Heythrop College, Oxfordshire, to begin his earliest philosophical studies and to pursue an external degree at the University of London.⁴

²*On the Threshold of the Halfway House: The Lonergan/Stewart Encounter*. Unpublished.

³In the original preface to *Insight*, which accompanied the manuscript of *Insight* to the publisher in 1954, Lonergan wrote: "But if I may borrow a phrase from Ortega y Gasset, one has to strive to mount to the level of one's time." See *The Lonergan Reader*, ed. Mark D. Morelli and Elizabeth A. Morelli (Toronto and New York: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 34.

⁴For a brief account of Lonergan's stay at Heythrop, see Richard Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 8-15.

It should be recognized that an inquiry of this sort requires the use of relatively broad classifications of philosophical movements and positions, and these do tend to obscure real complexities. However, I believe these characterizations will be sufficient for my purposes here. I shall leave the task of detailed comparison and contrast of the various positions of the time and place with Lonergan's mature position for future investigation. This is a large topic, and I propose to make only a beginning.

Accordingly, my aims here are fairly limited. First, I wish to direct attention to the specifically philosophical perplexities agitating the intellectual atmosphere and which were in the process of being worked out during Lonergan's student days in England; and, second, I shall direct attention to one movement in particular going forward at that time which sought to resolve those perplexities. My hypothesis shall be that Lonergan's project may well have been influenced both by the problems in the air and by the movement in question. I shall note the convergence of the philosophical problematic of that time and place with Lonergan's own philosophical aims; and I shall suggest that the seeds of a more satisfactory solution may have been planted in Lonergan's mind by a particular effort made at that time to untangle and resolve it.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMATIC: TO RECOVER REALISM

First, then, the specifically philosophical perplexities of the place and time. The dominant philosophical issue in England in the first third of the twentieth century can be framed by the invasion of British philosophy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by German idealism, on the one hand, by way especially of the charismatic T. H. Green of Balliol and his enthusiastic followers, and by the subsequent series of realist reactions both of British philosophers and of those American philosophers who were in tune with and joined the British debates, on the other.⁵ I wish to draw attention, then, to the series of realist reactions and re-positionings in response to the idealists' challenge.

⁵See Muirhead's *Contemporary British Philosophy: Personal Statements (Second Series)* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1925), 15.

The idealists' challenge emerged with the relatively rapid assimilation, especially in late Victorian Oxford, and largely by way of Edinburgh, of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel's absolute idealism, and the widely read proto-neo-Kantian philosophy of Hermann Lötze. It took form variously and most notably in the predominantly ethical idealism of Green and his school and in the more thoroughgoing metaphysical idealism of F. H. Bradley.⁶ This assimilation was prepared at Oxford by mounting discontent with the rise of physical reductionism in psychology, sensism and positivism in epistemology, individualism in ethics, and naturalism and materialism in metaphysics.⁷ German idealism began to get a grip on Oxford philosophy in the 1850s.⁸ By the early 1870s it had tightened its hold and had found a place in the *Litterae Humaniores* curriculum and on the Greats examinations. Its influence was still strong enough in the Edwardian age to influence significantly, by his own account in his *Autobiography*, the intellectual formation of the idealist philosopher of history R. G. Collingwood and to dominate the 1924 and 1925 volumes of Muirhead's well-known collection of statements by his philosophical contemporaries.⁹

The realist response to the German invasion began at once and unfolded as a series of defensive philosophical maneuvers. While the various realist positions overlapped and interpenetrated, for present purposes they may be divided into four waves. The first wave was "representational realism" or "copyism." Its clearly identified enemy was idealism. But, representational realism proved to be as indefensible as the naïve realism which the English appropriation of the German critique had dismantled. Its incapacity to meet adequately the idealist criticism was widely recognized, and idealism continued to dominate the intellectual scene. Copyism was followed by a series of efforts to overcome its glaring

⁶See Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T. H. Green and His Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

⁷See James Patrick, *The Magdalen Metaphysicals: Idealism and Orthodoxy at Oxford 1901-1945* (Mercer University Press, 1985), 5.

⁸*The Magdalen Metaphysicals*, 3.

⁹R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), ch. 3; *Contemporary British Philosophy* (First Series) and (Second Series).

weaknesses, but it was only with the turn of the century that idealism's grip loosened and the balance began to shift.

Illustrative, perhaps, of idealism's recession at Oxford was J. A. Stewart's election to the White's Chair of Moral Philosophy. In 1897 Stewart defeated Edward Caird, a Green School idealist who had recently returned to Oxford from Scotland to become Master of Balliol, despite apparently strong support for Caird in the form of a memorial signed by a large number of the philosophy dons. The White's Chair had been held previously by the anti-Catholic, socially conscious T. H. Green of Balliol himself and, after Green's death, by the idealist philosopher and translator of Hegel, William Wallace.¹⁰ Stewart, in contrast, was a fairly reclusive Anglo-Catholic don from Christ Church, Balliol's long-standing intellectual competitor,¹¹ who had been molded in his student days by the detached and disinterested intellectualism of the Oxford educational reformer Mark Pattison at Lincoln College. His first major work, a two-volume commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which appeared in 1892, with its still durable scholarly display of Aristotle's social and political conservatism, had at once undermined the Green School idealists' ahistorical enlistment of Aristotle in their social reformist cause and given considerable comfort to Balliol's traditional adversaries, the High Church conservatives of Christ Church. His philosophical position was characterized at the time of his election as "immanent realism," which suggests that, while he retained a realist outlook, Stewart was no naïve representationalist or copyist. Stewart's election, and his electors' apparent dismissal of the Caird memorial, seriously disrupted Oxford intellectual life. It provoked published complaints of anti-idealist bias in the electors by the idealists J. H. Muirhead and J. S. Mackenzie.¹² Whereas

¹⁰Stewart's election was noted in *The Philosophical Review* 6, 5 (September 1897), 576. Green had been elected to the Chair in 1878. His lectures from 1878 until his death in 1882, when he was succeeded by Wallace, formed the substance of his unfinished *Prolegomena to Ethics*. See *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. VIII, 499.

¹¹See Geoffrey Faber, *Jowett: A Portrait with Background* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 223. See also Rev. R. St. John Tyrwhitt, "Christ Church," in *The Colleges of Oxford: Their History and Tradition*, ed. Andrew Clark (London: Methuen & Co., 1891).

¹²J. S. Mackenzie was a student of Edward Caird; Muirhead had studied at Glasgow and Balliol College, Oxford. See *Contemporary British Philosophy* (First Series), 231, 307.

the memorial was in fact merely an affirmation of Caird's qualifications to stand for the White's Chair, Muirhead represented it as a show of support for Caird's election and as a strong public expression of pro-idealist sentiment. The Oxford pragmatist F. C. S. Schiller reported in letters to his friend and mentor William James that, as a consequence of Stewart's election, Caird's loss, and Muirhead's published account of his interpretation of the intention of the memorial, some Oxford dons were giving others the silent treatment, and the intellectual atmosphere at Oxford had turned "lurid."¹³ Two years after his election Stewart, who much preferred the disinterested quietude of a scholar and typically steered clear of public disputes, whether intellectual or political, published a call for the signers of the memorial to disassociate themselves publicly from "Mr. Muirhead's legend — which other imperfectly informed writers will probably again repeat, till it becomes accepted everywhere as a truth."¹⁴ By the turn of the century, as Stewart's election and the controversy surrounding it seem to suggest, the idealist tide had begun to turn.

In the first decades of the twentieth century the second, third, and fourth waves of realist reaction washed over the English intellectual landscape. This onslaught of realist positions cannot be explained, as Muirhead would have it, by university politics alone. It seems to have been motivated partly by the unabated pragmatic success of the implicit realism of naive common sense and partly by the accumulating successes of natural sciences guided by the same implicit realism. The second wave

The articles are J. H. Muirhead, "The Oxford Chairs of Philosophy: The Need of Reform," *The Contemporary Review*, LXXIV (July-December 1898): 724-36; J. S. Mackenzie, "The Oxford Chairs of Philosophy," *International Journal of Ethics* 9, 3 (April 1899): 378-79.

¹³*The Correspondence of William James*, vol. 8, 1895-June 1899, ed. Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 467.

¹⁴See Remarks on Certain Memorialists, by White's Professor of Moral Philosophy (J. A. Stewart), Oxford, May 1899, 4. This document is held by the Bodleian Library (G. A. Oxon 80 611 (28)) and is quoted with the permission of the Curators of the Bodleian Library. Stewart opens his remarks with the following: "As a man of peace, anxious to have leisure for my work, I have been unwilling to enter into the fray which Mr. Muirhead's article in the *Contemporary Review* for November, 1898, has stirred up" (1).

was "English Neo-realism," represented by G. E. Moore, Samuel Alexander, and Bertrand Russell. Its enemy remained idealism, both in its Berkelean and in its more philosophically challenging and problematic German form, but it also opposed the dualism of representational realism. The third wave was an American product called "New Realism." It appeared in the first decade of the new century but only achieved high visibility with the publication in 1912 of a cooperative volume, *The New Realism*, by six American philosophers led by Ralph Barton Perry. Against both idealism and representative realism, it insisted upon the unmediated or real presence to consciousness of the object of knowledge. But, in opposition to English Neo-realism, it replaced the mental act of awareness, which the former had retained, with a behaviorist doctrine of bodily response and espoused a physical monism.¹⁵ A fourth wave of realist reaction, also American, reached British shores four years later, in 1916, in the form of a small volume published by Roy Wood Sellars, and it went by the name of "Critical Realism." Like the other post-representationalist positions, it rejected idealism, but it also opposed both the physical monism of American New Realism and what it derided as the "merely logical realism" of the English Neo-realists.¹⁶

It is this fourth wave that should peak the interest of scholars on the lookout for antecedents to Lonergan's mature position. For Lonergan, who began his philosophical studies while this fourth wave of realist reaction was still surging, eventually would adopt the name "Critical Realism" for his own position.¹⁷ It appears, then, that this "Critical Realist" response to idealism deserves special attention. First, from the historical standpoint of the young Lonergan it was the state-of-the-art

¹⁵For a survey of the series of realist positions up to 1922, see Arthur Kenyon Rogers, *English and American Philosophy Since 1800: A Critical Survey* (1922; reprint, Kraus Reprint Co., New York, 1970).

¹⁶See Durant Drake, Arthur O. Lovejoy, James Bissett Pratt, Arthur K. Rogers, George Santayana, Roy Wood Sellars, and C. A. Strong, *Essays in Critical Realism: A Cooperative Study of the Problem of Knowledge* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1920), vi. The "merely logical realism" alluded to here is well-illustrated by G. E. Moore's famous "Refutation of Idealism."

¹⁷See *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 3, ed. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 217.

response, as it were, to the idealist challenge; and, second, it goes by the name Lonergan gave to his own mature position.

But if, as G. E. Moore argued in his famous attempt to refute Berkeleian idealism, one should not conclude hyper-critically that *esse* is *percipi*, nor should one assume hyper-naively, as it were, that *percipi* is *esse*. A closer investigation of the dynamics of realist reaction in the second and third decades of the twentieth century in England reveals yet another less visible and less well-known realist position which, interestingly, also went by the tantalizing name "Critical Realism." It emerged in virtual simultaneity with American Critical Realism but differed significantly from the position the Americans espoused. This other Critical Realism was articulated by the English philosopher and University of London professor G. Dawes Hicks.

Dawes Hicks had studied at Manchester with the Kant scholar Robert Adamson. He had followed in late Victorian Oxford the lectures of William Wallace and R. L. Nettleship, both prominent idealists, and of Cook Wilson, the most influential realist. He had also spent four years in Leipzig studying with psychologist and philosopher Wilhelm Wundt and Max Heinze.¹⁸ From 1926 to 1928, during the first two years of Lonergan's studies in England, Dawes Hicks headed the Department of Logic and Psychology at the University of London and taught the course on the nature of logical judgment. The formal connection of both Lonergan and Dawes Hicks to the University of London is very suggestive. But it should be noted that Lonergan's pursuit of an external degree did not involve following courses at London. So, it cannot be claimed that Lonergan studied under Dawes Hicks. However, Lonergan's academic connection with London may have moved him to read the works of London professors; and, if he kept abreast of the major philosophical journals, he certainly would have been exposed to the ideas of both Sellars and Dawes Hicks. The concrete possibility of such exposure is suggested by the fact that the Heythrop library currently holds the early numbers of the journals in which the New Realists and both types of Critical Realist regularly published, as well as pre-1930 editions of books in which the

¹⁸See *Contemporary British Philosophy* (Second Series), 108.

various positions were aired and criticized.¹⁹ In any case, we must distinguish two "Critical Realisms" which may have attracted the young Lonergan's attention.

As its use for two distinct positions suggests, the name "Critical Realism" was in the air before it was adopted by either Sellars or Dawes Hicks. The name has a history that predates the emergence of the Critical Realisms of both. Before proceeding further, a brief account of the history of the use of Critical Realism as the name for a philosophical response to the idealist challenge is in order.

CRITICAL REALISM IN THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE

Critical Realism, as a name for a philosophical position, gained currency in British and American philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It appeared initially as a translation from German. The earliest reference in the English context to a philosophical position that characterized itself as Critical Realism is perhaps to be found in a review of A. Riehl's *Der Philosophische Kriticismus und seine Bedeutung für die positive Wissenschaft* in the January 1889 issue of *Mind* written by Robert Adamson, the Kant scholar and mentor of Dawes Hicks. In his review article, Adamson reported that Riehl called his own point of view "the standpoint of Critical Realism."²⁰ A little more than a decade later Charles Judd concluded an expository article in *The Philosophical Review* on the system of Wilhelm Wundt, under whom Dawes Hicks had studied in Leipzig, by noting that "the best short phrase for the description of the system is that which Wundt is making use of in recent articles, 'critical realism.'"²¹

It appears, though, that the first use of the name Critical Realism to designate an English or American philosophical position or movement was that of Roy Wood Sellars who, in 1916, published *Critical Realism: A*

¹⁹The books include the Muirhead volumes; the journals are *The Philosophical Review*, *The Contemporary Review*, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, *The Journal of Philosophy*, and *Mind*.

²⁰*Contemporary British Philosophy* (Second Series), 70.

²¹Charles Judd, "Wundt's System of Philosophy," *The Philosophical Review*, July 1897, 385.

Study of the Nature and Conditions of Knowledge.²² But, just a year later an article titled "The Basis of Critical Realism" by Dawes Hicks appeared in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*,²³ and it seems that he employed the name without any awareness of Sellars's volume. In 1920, Sellars, joined by six other American philosophers, published a collaborative volume entitled *Essays in Critical Realism: A Co-operative Study*. Sellars's collaborators were Durant Drake, Arthur O. Lovejoy, James Bissett Pratt, Arthur K. Rogers, George Santayana, and C. A. Strong. A response came at a joint session of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society in July 1924, when Dawes Hicks chaired a symposium on the theme "Critical Realism: Is the difficulty in affirming a nature independent of mind overcome by the distinction between essence and existence?" The participants, in addition to Dawes Hicks, were J. Loewenberg of the University of California, C. D. Broad, and the Reverend C. J. Shebbeare.²⁴ Loewenberg, in his published report on the symposium, described it as an attempt to "liberate Critical Realism [as proposed by the Sellars group, and especially by Santayana] from its polemical context."²⁵ It was a Dawes-Hicksian Critical Realist evaluation of American Critical Realism. In 1927, C. D. Broad used the name "Critical Realism," but only once and in passing, for the position he espoused.²⁶

During the 1920s the phrase "critical realism" occurred fairly frequently in articles in the three prominent journals of the time, *Mind*, *The Journal of Philosophy*, and *The Philosophical Review*. Almost invariably these uses are related directly to the movement associated with Sellars and his six compatriots.²⁷ Indeed, a fair number of these articles were by

²²Roy Wood Sellars, *Critical Realism: A Study of the Nature and Conditions of Knowledge* (New York: Rand McNally & Co., 1916).

²³Cited in G. Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism: Studies in the Philosophy of Mind and Nature* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1938).

²⁴Announced in *Mind*, NS, 33, 130 (April 1924), 230-31.

²⁵*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume IV (1924): 87.

²⁶C. D. Broad, *The Mind and Its Place in Nature*, 1927, 422 ff.

²⁷See, for example, B. H. Bode, "Critical Realism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 19, 3 (Feb 2, 1922), 68-78; Roy Wood Sellars, "Critical Realism and Its Critics," *The Philosophical Review*, 33, 4 (July 1924), 379-97; Horace B. English, "Naive Psychological Realism vs. Critical Realism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 23, 25 (Dec. 9, 1926), 682-85; Roy Wood Sellars, "What Is the Correct Interpretation of Critical Realism?" *The Journal of*

Sellars himself who had undertaken to defend his personal version of Critical Realism against different versions espoused by his former collaborators. Finally, in 1938 Dawes Hicks published *Critical Realism: Studies in the Philosophy of Mind and Nature*. Even though it was published eight years after Lonergan left England, this volume should be included among the important loci of the phrase "critical realism," because it brings together in one volume articles published by Dawes Hicks during the previous twenty years, the first being his paper of 1917. More importantly, it contains in its introduction the only serious reflection by a self-styled Critical Realist, as far as I can determine, on the significance of the name and on the differences between Dawes Hicks's usage and that of Sellars and his collaborators.

Before going further, a summary of the points made so far is in order. When Lonergan was in England, the philosophical atmosphere was permeated by the problematic of recovering realism, in some post-naive form, from its eclipse by idealism. The problematic was worked out in a sequence of realist re-positionings. Tied for last in the sequence were two positions both of which called themselves "Critical Realism" – one associated with Sellars, the other associated with Dawes Hicks. But, the name "Critical Realism" was not invented by either Sellars or Dawes Hicks. It seems to have entered the Anglo-American philosophical vocabulary by way of Adamson who had acquired it from Wilhelm Wundt.

A PROMINENT FEATURE OF LONERGAN'S CRITICAL REALISM

I have traced with admittedly broad strokes a philosophical context marked by the struggle of the realist objective to realize itself anew, to reground itself, not by retrenchment into an unrecoverable realist naivete, but intelligently and reasonably subsequent to the idealist critique. At this point, it is important to recall that a prominent feature of Lonergan's Critical Realism is its twofold claim to have found a ground for realism *beyond idealism* – not, so to speak, *before or beneath idealism* – and to have

Philosophy, 24, 9 (Apr. 28, 1927), 238-41; Roy Wood Sellars, "A Re-Examination of Critical Realism," *The Philosophical Review*, 38, 5 (September 1929), 439-55.

done so by drawing a critical distinction between two radically different kinds of knowing. In the Introduction to *Insight*, in what I believe may be among the paragraphs in that work most deserving of prolonged reflection, Lonergan wrote:

For the appropriation of one's own rational self-consciousness, which has been so stressed in this introduction, is not an end in itself but rather a beginning. It is a necessary beginning, for unless one breaks the duality in one's knowing, one doubts that understanding correctly is knowing. Under the pressure of that doubt, either one will sink into the bog of knowing that is without understanding, or else one will cling to understanding but sacrifice knowing on the altar of an immanentism, an idealism, a relativism. From the horns of that dilemma one escapes only through the discovery – and one has not made it yet if one has no clear memory of its startling strangeness – that there are two quite different realisms, that there is an incoherent realism, half animal and half human, that poses as a halfway house between materialism and idealism, and on the other hand that there is an intelligent and reasonable realism between which and materialism the halfway house is idealism.²⁸

The two ways of knowing in question are (1) knowing as experiencing, understanding, and reflective judging, and (2) confrontational knowing, or what Lonergan frequently refers to with the phrase "knowing as looking." The two types of realism in question are, on the one hand, Lonergan's Critical Realism and, on the other, a type or class encompassing a wide variety of basically incoherent realist positions, all wallowing in "the bog of knowing that is without understanding."

When Lonergan claims that his Critical Realism is "beyond idealism" he means that it does not seek to reinstate realism either by means of the retrograde pursuit of a salvific breakthrough in the theory of perception – as those who lament the passing of realist naivete might wish – or by means of some new but still idealistic theory of conceptual formation and conceptual combination – as those who admit the legitimacy of the idealist critique of immediate perceptual confrontation may hope. Rather, he means that it regrounds realism by means of a breakthrough in the theory of rational judgment on the adequacy of

²⁸Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3, 22.

conceptual formulations of understandings of perceptual experiences. As conceptual formulation of possibly correct understanding follows upon inquiry into perceptual experience, so idealism is “beyond” naïve realism. And, as rational judgment follows upon conceptual formulation of possibly correct understanding of perceptual experience, so Lonergan’s Critical Realism is “beyond” both idealism and naïve realism. Furthermore, while realists who nurture a nostalgia for lost naivete may be inclined to think here of judgments as implicit in perception, and while idealists who have reconciled themselves to the loss of immediacy may tend to think here of judgments as syntheses or combinations of concepts, Lonergan – neither nostalgic for realist naivete nor satisfied with the merely negative import of the idealist critique – means by judgment the affirmation or negation of an otherwise merely conditioned proposition. The conditioned proposition is provided from the idealists’ favored field of conceptual formation and combination, and its fulfilling conditions, as grasped by reflective insight,²⁹ are provided from the naïve realists’ favored field of perceptual experience.

In this way, Lonergan escapes the either/or of perception/understanding, of the faculty of intuition/faculty of understanding, of the perceptual field/conceptual field. Moreover, he escapes the vacillation between these poles which marks the efforts of so many philosophers who suppose that, if a better ground for realism exists, it is to be found in one or the other or in some uneasy combination of the two. This sort of philosophical rummaging about in a field of cognitive performance that has been artificially contracted by the absorption of the distinctive activity of rational judgment by antecedent stages of the cognitive process can only produce “incoherent realisms.” Typically, these “incoherent realisms” are marked by an attempt to make perception alone or some “judgment of perception,” or understanding alone or some synthetic judgment, or the two in some unnatural and phenomenologically unverifiable combination, carry the full weight of realist conviction.

²⁹Lonergan described his account of the rational grasp of the virtually unconditioned as his most important contribution to philosophy. See *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 3, ch. 9 and 10 and ch. 11, sections 9 – 11.

In the absence of a sufficiently critical distinction between the two types of knowing, the theory of knowledge which emerges must be an uneasy combination of naïve realist faith, on the one hand, and idealist scepticism which cripples that faith with reasonable doubts, on the other. Accordingly, even the most sophisticated and well-formed versions of “incoherent realism” will be unstable mixtures of fundamentally irreconcilable premises, which cause a stir when they emerge but are ushered fairly quickly from the philosophical scene by logical or methodological criticism. A realism “beyond idealism” will recognize that the idealist critique rules out absolutely a resolution of the realist problematic by way of a new theory of perception; and, further, it will recognize that an uncompromised realist quest demands real, not merely conceptual, distinctions. As Lonergan remarks in his last major work, *Method in Theology*:

To move beyond idealism to realism, one has to discover that man’s intellectual and rational operations involve a transcendence of the operating subject, that the real is what we come to know through a grasp of a certain type of virtually unconditioned.³⁰

It is this broad feature of Lonergan’s enterprise and position, then, that is to be kept in mind as we seek to determine which of the two Critical Realisms is more likely to have influenced the young Lonergan’s thinking. A closer examination of them should be guided by questions such as the following: Does one Critical Realism strive more explicitly than the other to go *beyond idealism*? Does one situate itself reflectively *beyond idealism*? Does one regard idealism as a stage or a halfway house, as Lonergan puts it, on the way to Critical Realism and distinguish itself for this reason from the other? Is one best described as a halfway house between materialism and idealism? Does either employ a distinction resembling Lonergan’s critical distinction between two kinds of knowing? Does either look beyond theory of perception and theory of conceptual combination for the solution it seeks? Surely, if one of these Critical Realisms identifies as its explicit aim the transcendence of idealism – as

³⁰*Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), 76.

opposed to its mere destruction – and the other does not, then that Critical Realism is the more likely candidate for fruitful exploration. Finally, it is also possible, of course, that Lonergan drew inspiration from both of these Critical Realisms, or that he drew no inspiration from either.

THE CRITICAL REALISMS OF SELLARS AND DAWES HICKS: BEYOND IDEALISM?

With these questions in mind, let us see what Dawes Hicks had to say about the name “critical realism” in the introduction to his collection of 1938. He begins by noting that he made use of the name before its adoption in 1920 by the American Critical Realists in his 1917 article in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.³¹ While it is true that Dawes Hicks used the name before the American collaborative volume appeared, Sellars’s use actually preceded Dawes Hicks’s by a year. Still, Sellars’s himself acknowledged that his earlier book was not widely read, and so Dawes Hicks may be excused for the oversight.³² This is, in any case, a minor point of usage. More important and more interesting, given our present concerns, is the following observation by Dawes Hicks:

While [the American Critical Realists] disclaim any reference to the Kantian philosophy in their use of the word “critical,” I claim to be using it in what may legitimately be said to be the Kantian sense. It was, I take it, the essence of Kant’s critical method that it should put as the first question to be faced in philosophical inquiry, what are the conditions of knowledge of objects?³³

The American Critical Realists, on the other hand, declare in the preface to their collaborative volume:

Needless to say, the word “critical” [in the phrase “critical realism”] has no reference to the Kantian philosophy.³⁴

³¹Sellars, *Critical Realism*, v.

³²Sellars himself refers to his “little known book” in an article of 1924, “Critical Realism and Its Critics,” *The Philosophical Review*, 33, 4 (July 1924): 379.

³³Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism: Studies in the Philosophy of Mind and Nature*, v.

³⁴Sellars, *Critical Realism*, vi.

Thus, while both Critical Realisms focus on the problem of knowledge, Dawes Hicks is much more obviously in dialogue with Kant and in line with idealist transcendental inquiry, whereas Sellars asserts that the main aim of the realist must be to meet the arguments of Berkeley.³⁵

Dawes Hicks proceeds to summarize realist efforts to *transcend or go beyond* the impasse reached by idealist systems. It is to be noted that he does not include among these efforts the naïve “natural realism” of Reid and the Scottish Common Sense school, American New Realism, or even Sellars’s Critical Realism. “I am thinking,” he writes,

of a number of patient investigators who, whilst imbued with the lesson of Kant and Hegel, came to see that the place assigned Nature in the idealist systems of the nineteenth century was unsatisfactory and impossible.³⁶

Dawes Hicks finds the beginning of this movement in the labors of Lötze who gave prominence to “the discrepancy between the large conceptions of the idealist systems and the important results which the special sciences were accumulating in abundance.”³⁷ And he quotes Lötze: “It is only inquiries conducted in the spirit of realism that will satisfy the wishes of idealism.”³⁸ Lötze’s work was carried forward in England by Robert Adamson, Dawes Hicks’s mentor at Manchester. Adamson was not only the foremost Kant scholar in England, but Dawes Hicks reports that he had a “companionable feeling” toward the idealism of Hegel.³⁹ Adamson agreed with the idealist claim that the mistake of naïve or intuitive realism lay with its starting point in “the assumption that the independence of the object is immediately given”⁴⁰ Still, he disagreed with the subjective idealists who held that “the object is first given as inward. The object is not given,” he argued, “either ‘outwardly’

³⁵Sellars, *Critical Realism*, v.

³⁶Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xiv.

³⁷Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xiv.

³⁸Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xiv.

³⁹Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xv.

⁴⁰Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xiv.

or 'inwardly', as it were."⁴¹ These views were shared by Leonard Hobhouse. Against Kant, both Adamson and Hobhouse held that what the idealists took to be the abstract and general, logical conditions of experience are in fact "the late results of . . . our interpretation . . ."⁴² The object, writes Dawes Hicks,

is given as a content present to an inward state, but the distinction between inner and outer, or between subject and object, gradually comes to recognition in the course of mental evolution.⁴³

Reasoning along similar lines, according to Dawes Hicks, were George Fullerton and Shadworth Hodgson.

Dawes Hicks, then, claims that his critical realism belongs to "a distinctive movement in philosophy" that had been unfolding since the 1880s when Green enlisted German idealism to assist him in blunting the materialist, sensist, individualist assault on the spiritual.⁴⁴ He views this movement, moreover, as "a perfectly legitimate development" of idealist speculation that inherited its premises from "the long labours of post-Kantian idealists."⁴⁵ The subjectivism of Berkeley had been dispensed with by T. H. Green, and by Hegel before that, and consistent efforts had been made to escape the subjectivism that dogged the footsteps of Kant. The transition to realism of the type Dawes Hicks attempts to construct is, he says,

but a short advance beyond idealism, and it is to be made by way of the realization that the subordination of all fact to the conditions of thought tended so to emphasize the importance of the latter as to make it appear as though the detailed investigation of particular

⁴¹Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xvi.

⁴²Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xvi.

⁴³Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xvi.

⁴⁴Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xvii.

⁴⁵Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xvii.

kinds of fact were of comparatively slight philosophical significance.⁴⁶

Dawes Hicks's Critical Realism attempts to preserve the British idealist interest in affirming, in reaction against the increasingly arid atmosphere of late Victorian Oxford, the affinity of all objects with spirit, while resisting with realist faith the dissolution of all distinctions. The trick to this delicate maneuver, moreover, is not to revert to pre-Kantian modes of philosophizing. It is to carry on "the tradition of the critical method" by pursuing the critical question, not in direction of further abstract logical conditions of experience, but along what Adamson called "the long and difficult path of facts."⁴⁷ Again, the realism that transcends idealism is to be a further unfolding of a tendency in idealist speculation itself to recognize that, as Adamson put it, "the basis of all logical necessity is the necessity of fact,"⁴⁸ and to proceed on the basis of that recognition to concretize the abstract self-conscious ego of Kant as a developing conscious self.⁴⁹

American Critical Realism, on the other hand, seeks to recover a form of realism independently of this idealist trend that Dawes Hicks has identified and with which he allies himself. In this way, Sellars's Critical Realism differs significantly from the Critical Realism of Dawes Hicks. But, Sellars's Critical Realism is not therefore to be regarded as containing no valuable lessons. Sellars rejected the assumption shared by Locke and Berkeley that if there is to be knowledge of the physical world it must be by "direct or indirect apprehension."⁵⁰ He held that Berkeley's arguments were "based on a conception of knowledge that did not hold for science."⁵¹ He charged idealism with adhering to the same intuitionist conception of knowledge, and he insisted that scientific knowledge is propositional and must undergo an immanent test.⁵² Still, in the end,

⁴⁶Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, note.

⁴⁷Quoted by Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xvii.

⁴⁸Quoted by Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xvi.

⁴⁹Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, xvii.

⁵⁰Sellars, *Critical Realism*, vi.

⁵¹Sellars, *Critical Realism*, vi.

⁵²Sellars, *Critical Realism*, vi.

despite these promising insights, Sellars adopts in his 1916 volume a realist position which he describes variously as Naturalism, Neo-Materialism, and New Materialism.⁵³ Moreover, in 1924, Sellars states succinctly his then pragmatic way of resolving the problem posed by our inability to make an apprehensive comparison between the object itself and the content of consciousness by which alone the object can be given:

My own answer would be of this kind: things seem to appear or to reflect themselves in the contents which they control in the organism; and on the theory of realism they would do just this. The structure and behavior of things is reproducible in another medium [that is, consciousness] because they are an order rather than a stuff. In the second place, my behavior is successfully guided by this claimed knowledge through contents; and it is hard to understand why there would be this successful guidance if the contents did not give knowledge. In the third place, the scientist is able to predict future occurrences in terms of this knowledge, and this prediction would also be hard to explain on the basis of agnosticism. In the fourth place, tested knowledge-claims harmonize and enable us to build up a system of knowledge which appears to give us insight into nature, and which connects up with guidance, control and prediction. Thus, ultimately, it is a consilience of these reasons which strengthens the critical realist in his belief that his knowledge-claim is justified.⁵⁴

While we cannot immerse ourselves in the details here, it appears that, despite valuable insights which invited a critical distinction between two ways of knowing and a doctrine of rational judgment, the stubborn intuitionist assumption maintains its grip on Sellars as well. Consequently, instead of passing through idealism as through a halfway house, Sellars erects a sophisticated New Materialism halfway between vulgar materialism and idealism.

How does Dawes Hicks fare in his deliberate attempt to go beyond idealism? Not well, unfortunately. According to Dawes Hicks, Kant asked, "Why was it that that which is known *stands over against* the knowing subject?"⁵⁵ Dawes Hicks himself italicizes the phrase "stands

⁵³Sellars, *Critical Realism*, vii.

⁵⁴"Critical Realism and Its Critics," *The Philosophical Review*, 33, 4 (July 1924): 387.

⁵⁵Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, i.

over against." He does so, though, not to call our critical attention to, and to put us on guard against, the residual confrontationism or intuitionism of which Lonergan rightly accuses Kant, but rather, as we shall see, to emphasize Kant's interest in *objectivity*.⁵⁶ Kant asked, says Dawes Hicks, rephrasing the question, "How did it come about that subjective activity should carry with it reference to an object?" In attempting to solve this problem, Dawes Hicks argues, Kant assumed the heterogeneity of sense and thought, a generic difference between sensibility and understanding – one receptive, the other spontaneous. Kant's emphasis upon this putatively *generic* difference obscures what Dawes Hicks calls the *genetic* difference discoverable by a survey of the stages in the factual history of consciousness.⁵⁷ "A sharp antithesis," he writes, "... between the pure generality of thought and the indeterminate particulars of sense allows no room for this progressive development."⁵⁸ The antithesis, Dawes Hicks argues, may appear plausible if, like Kant, we take scientific experience as typical. But the antithesis breaks down when we consider the entire actual range of cognitive experience.⁵⁹

To Dawes Hicks, the antithesis of sense and understanding is the source of the subjective character that Kant assigns to knowledge as a whole.⁶⁰ Empirical elements of experience, arising from mechanical affection by a real agent, are crude materials to be worked up into the form of knowledge, with the outcome being a *tertium quid* between the cognizing mind and the things themselves. Dawes Hicks finds in this view a "violent contradiction."

And so the awkward predicament confronts us of having, on the one hand, to admit that what is experienced is constituted exclusively of mental elements, whilst, on the other hand, it has all along been recognized as the core of the whole problem, that the very essence of

⁵⁶For Lonergan on Kant's "vestigial empiricism," see *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 3, ch. 11, section 10.

⁵⁷Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, 4.

⁵⁸Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, 5.

⁵⁹Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, 5.

⁶⁰Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, 5.

an act of knowing what we call "things" consists in a "reference" to that which is other than and distinct from the finite knower.⁶¹

The source of this contradiction, says Dawes Hicks, is to be found in Kant's starting point. But, the inadequate starting point that Dawes Hicks identifies is not the one a Lonerganian might expect. It is not Kant's extroverted ideal of direct apprehension of objects already-out-there-now-real, that is, his vestigial empiricism, and his failure to distinguish critically two radically different kinds of knowing. It is, rather, Kant's appropriation of Hume's conception of sense-experience as constituted by a mere aggregate of discrete impressions. Given this assumed theory of perception, says Dawes Hicks, a synthesis or combination of the manifold becomes necessary. This synthesis becomes the very act of knowing, and its product the intervening and object-veiling *tertium quid*.

In order to overcome this immanentist consequence, Dawes Hicks rejects Hume's doctrine as erroneous⁶² and claims instead that "sense-qualities are, what they purport to be, veritable properties of external things – entities which, as Kant himself had agreed – *stand over against the conscious subject* as the objects of his cognitive states."⁶³ This time the italics are mine. To Dawes Hicks it follows that knowledge will not be an act of synthesis, but rather an act "of discriminating, of distinguishing, of comparing" features of already synthesized existing things. Knowing is a process of discriminating the features of indiscriminately given wholes, of distinguishing them from their surroundings, and of recognizing their relations.⁶⁴ Understanding has been contracted by Dawes Hicks into an aspect of perception.

In brief, then, Dawes Hicks's Critical Realism introduces a new theory of perception to replace the impressionism of Hume and, in that way, seeks to escape the subjectivist implications of idealism. But it does so at the price of the synthesizing function of understanding. This new theory of perception was summarized by Dawes Hicks in his contribution

⁶¹Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, 5-6.

⁶²Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, 6.

⁶³Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, 7.

⁶⁴Dawes Hicks, *Critical Realism*, 7.

to Muirhead's 1925 volume under a title that probably carried at that time a connotation of transcendence but which now suggests collapse and retrogression, "From Idealism to Realism."⁶⁵

Thus, what Lonergan says about the strengths and weaknesses of idealism in his article "Cognitional Structure" seems to be applicable to Dawes Hicks and his brand of Critical Realism:

The idealist ... correctly refutes the naïve realist claim that the whole objectivity of human knowing is found in some component of human knowing, but mistakenly concludes that human knowing does not yield valid knowledge of reality ... The strength of the idealist position is the sharpness with which it refutes the mistaken claims of naïve realists; its weakness is its inability to break completely with the confusions introduced by naïve realism.⁶⁶

On the other hand, the following remark by Dawes Hicks seems applicable to Lonergan and pertinent to our efforts to understand more completely Lonergan's mature position:

I think no worker in philosophy will regret having passed through at some period of his history an idealistic phase of thought. It is a great advantage to have felt for a while at least the strength of the idealist position through having viewed it from within, from the vantage-ground of one who is convinced of its truth. For I doubt whether the strength of the case that can be made out for an idealistic interpretation of the world is ever realized by those who survey it merely from the outside, and whose attitude towards it is that of hostile critics engaged in demolishing now one and now another of its various tenets.⁶⁷

CONCLUDING REMARK

If Lonergan did happen to attend to the state-of-the-art realist response to idealism during his stay in England, what influence might it have had on him? "Influence," of course, is a very broad notion. Inasmuch as Dawes

⁶⁵*Contemporary British Philosophy* (Second Series), 107 ff.

⁶⁶Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3, 232.

⁶⁷*Contemporary British Philosophy* (Second Series), 109.

Hicks was still problematically involved in the confusion of the two kinds of knowing and inclined, moreover, like Kant to retain the ideal of immediate intuition, any influence in this instance would have amounted to an increase in frustration with the lack of success of the latest realist efforts to overcome the critical idealist assault on naïve realism and its seemingly subjectivist implications. That is to say, if Lonergan was indeed influenced during his stay in England by the philosophical problematic of that place and time, that familiarity, if it did not afford him a satisfactory realist solution, may well have served to potentiate, as Kierkegaard might say, his own *aporia*. Thus, it may have set the stage for his own quest for a *realism beyond idealism*, and so have contributed toward the fulfillment of the conditions for the emergence of his more thoroughgoing critical distinction between two kinds of knowing and his complete abandonment of the confrontationalist ideal, both of which are required for a truly Critical Realism beyond idealism. My hope is that, even if in the end this has been shown to be no more than concretely possible, the investigation will still have thrown additional light on Lonergan's mature position and its relationship to the philosophical milieu within which it began to grow.

THE SURPASSING SUBJECT

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"The greatest hazard of all, losing the self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all."¹

THE 17TH ANNUAL Timothy Fallon Memorial Lonergan Symposium provided those in attendance with the opportunity to revisit Lonergan's 1968 Aquinas Lecture and to thereby re-turn not simply to the subject, or even to *The Subject*, but also to Lonergan's definitive turn to the subject *as* subject. Doing so was as formative as it was timely in that subjectivity and consciousness are contemporary philosophical issues that are often as divisive as they are prevalent. The attendees who presented papers at the symposium have rightly begun to make contributions to published Lonergan studies and their lead is well-worth following.² The specific contribution I will make to what might be called Lonergan's philosophical anthropology is one that is more existential than historical. I agree with St. Amour's claim that if the history of philosophy is interpreted as "setting the conditions for the possibility of self-appropriation, as Lonergan's approach suggests it could be, then the identification of broad movements is only a beginning, and the detailed dialectical analysis of the specific contributions and shortcomings of particular thinkers will remain an important task for Lonergan scholarship for some time."³ I would add that a detailed

¹Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 32-33.

²See, for example, Paul St. Amour, "Kierkegaard's Retrieval of the Existential Subject," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 20 (2002): 87-113.

³St. Amour, "Kierkegaard's Retrieval," 88.

dialectical analysis of Lonergan's own contributions and shortcomings to establishing the conditions for the possibility of authentic self-appropriation is equally as important, however, and will also be so for some time. As such, it is important to recall that while Lonergan's "new emphasis on existential self-constitution in his latter account of self-appropriation" signals a definitive advancement over his *Insight* and "Cognitional Structure" formulations, this latter account must be subject to critical, as well as detailed, dialectical analysis.⁴ The critical question of whether Lonergan's more developed account of self-appropriation adequately articulates the "task of existential self-appropriation" is thus an open one, especially from the perspective of an ontology as existentially astute as Kierkegaard's.⁵

Far from wishing to imply that St. Amour is unaware of this critical question, or that his fine dialectical analysis of why Kierkegaard's articulation of self-appropriation at the existential level does not "completely evade the problem of the alienated subject," is faulty, my aim is to show why Lonergan does not *completely* evade this problem either.⁶ The critique I offer to this effect is an internal one, however, and is intended to expand Lonergan's account of the alienated subject so as to include a potential trap to which self-appropriating human subjects are susceptible. I believe that just as Lonergan's "intellectualist existentialism" can be affirmed without fostering an overly critical assessment of Kierkegaard, "exceptional self-appropriation at the existential level," regardless of whether it is articulated philosophically, religiously, or artistically, can be affirmed without fostering an overly critical assessment of Lonergan.⁷ Rather than doing so by turning to a specific figure from the history of philosophy, I will, together with a challenge from Habermas and some assistance from Kierkegaard, do so by turning to the existentialist literature of John Barth.

⁴St. Amour, "Kierkegaard's Retrieval," 109.

⁵St. Amour, "Kierkegaard's Retrieval," 104.

⁶St. Amour, "Kierkegaard's Retrieval," 109.

⁷St. Amour, "Kierkegaard's Retrieval," 111 and 112, respectively.

THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF SELF-RELATION

Loneragan reminds us in *The Subject* that the wealth of existential reflection can turn out to be a trap.⁸ Existential reflection is enriching because it is the key that “opens the doors to a philosophy, not of man in the abstract, but of concrete human living in its historical unfolding.”⁹ As such, “not only does it touch us intimately and speak to us convincingly but also it is the natural starting point for fuller reflection on the subject as incarnate.” Existential reflection is self-reflection that is as enriching as it is enlightening, then, because it reveals the human subject as a doer engaged in the lifelong project of self-making – not simply as a knower engaged in experiencing, understanding, and judging – and so highlights our key role in making ourselves what we are to be as selves. Existential reflection is simultaneously a trap in Lonergan’s view, however, because it tends to lead us away from the classical problems of cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics. Even if the traditional answers to these problems are defective, as Lonergan clearly recognizes they are, this does not mean that we should dismiss the crucial questions that prompted them. Doing so leads to an even more radical truncation of the self than existential reflection alone can remedy since crucial aspects of selfhood are neglected at the same time that long-neglected ones are explored. Thus the existential subject does not preclude the trap of the alienated subject: the self who, because he “renounces authentic living and drifts into the now seductive and now harsh rhythms of his psyche and nature,”¹⁰ is alienated from himself. The result is the drifter – the self who has yet to find himself.¹¹ When we renounce authentic living, itself understood via cognitional, epistemological, and metaphysical reflection, we allow ourselves to drift aimlessly among the rhythms of psyche and nature. Doing so alienates us from our selves in that it draws

⁸Bernard Lonergan, “The Subject,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. William Ryan and Bernard Tyrell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 85.

⁹Loneragan, “The Subject,” 85.

¹⁰Loneragan, “The Subject,” 86.

¹¹Bernard Lonergan, “*Existenz and Aggiornamento*,” *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, vol. 4, *Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 224.

us farther away from, rather than bringing us closer to, the primordial truths of authentic selfhood which existential self-reflection makes available to us.

Because these rhythms are as complex as they are varied and often serve to alienate us from ourselves in historically nuanced ways, it is necessary to further expand the account of the alienated subject Lonergan offers in his seminal lecture. The specific aspect of selfhood that must be explored in order to do so is self-consciousness. Such is the case because the account of the human subject Lonergan advances in *The Subject* – the study of oneself inasmuch as one is conscious – has itself been challenged in several philosophical circles. More specifically, Habermas's claim that the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted echoes the sentiments of numerous contemporary philosophers, albeit for different reasons.¹² Habermas articulates the widely accepted basis for this conclusion: "Whoever chooses the self-relation of the knowing subject as the starting point of his analysis has, since Fichte, had to deal with the following objection: self-consciousness could by no means be an original phenomenon, because whenever the knowing subject turns back upon itself, in order to lay hold of itself as an object, the spontaneity of conscious life withdraws from the very objective form under which it would have to be subsumed."¹³ Despite the many advances it enables, not to mention the vital role it plays within the self-appropriation of transcendental method, Habermas is right to claim that the self-relation of the knowing subject is a precarious starting point for philosophical analysis. For like the authenticity which it may aspire to, the self-relation of human subjectivity is a precarious reality. Mis-relation is as viable an alternative as authentic relation even, and especially, for those who are convinced that they have achieved the latter. The forms of despair and alienation that plague the self-relation of human subjects are as innumerable as are the means used to deny and otherwise escape this

¹²Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 296.

¹³Jurgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, trans. William Hohengarten (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 44. I will offer a response to this claim and its resulting conclusion – that the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted – in the final section of the paper.

lived reality. Similarly, the arduous work of retrieving the spontaneity of conscious life once abstract theorizing takes individual and cultural root is not simply a lifelong, but rather an epoch-long, challenge. It is because the self-relation of human subjectivity is such a precarious reality that the retrieval of the existential subject that St. Amour rightly ascribes to Kierkegaard is an ongoing task undertaken by many and achieved by few.

Similarly, the spontaneity of conscious life is properly retained by few because like existential reflection itself, the intentional exploration of human consciousness is not without its corresponding trap. This trap necessitates the expansion of the alienated subject I am proposing because it is one to which proponents of transcendental method are susceptible. More specifically, the heightening of consciousness that self-appropriation requires can mistakenly lead us to identify more with the consciousness we have of our selves than with the selves we are conscious of. For although we commonly recognize that being self-conscious is the condition for the possibility of being selves, we tend to neglect the related and, in my view, even more penetrating, insight that being selves is at the same time the condition for the possibility of being self-conscious. We must be self-conscious in order to be selves, but we must also *be* ourselves in order to be conscious of that which we are. Neglecting this latter insight precludes the fuller reflection on the self as incarnate that fosters authentic living, and is therefore as much of a trap as neglecting cognitional theory. This trap is set, moreover, by the fact that being a self requires self-making in a way that being self-conscious does not. Although it is true that we are responsible for our level of consciousness, the consciousness we have of ourselves is not itself a result of self-making in the same way that the self we are conscious of is. When we neglect the selves we are conscious of, therefore, by identifying more with the consciousness we have of ourselves, we fall into the trap of mistakenly proceeding as if self-making is more a matter of heightening our consciousness than of actually being the selves of which we are conscious. Proceeding in this manner leads to alienation no less than brushing aside the classical problems in the name of existential reflection because it leads us to renounce authentic living, and to even do so, ironically enough, in

the name of *self*-appropriation. That we might do so is ironic to a degree that Kierkegaard would likely appreciate more keenly than Lonergan.

IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE

Alienation from authentic living takes many forms which are as idiosyncratic and layered as subjectivity itself, but it always results from some failure to meet the challenge self-making confronts us with: producing the first and only edition of ourselves.¹⁴ This challenge is crystalized when, after having more and more to do with her/his own becoming, the subject reaches a critical point in his increasing autonomy. "It is reached when the subject finds out for himself that it is up to himself to decide what he is to make of himself."¹⁵ Here we see the true emergence of the person – we realize the need to make ourselves what we are to be as selves and so the existential subject, the subject with his personal essence at stake, emerges as such. It is at this critical point "that autonomy decides what autonomy is to be."¹⁶ And so it is ironic that the advice we commonly receive during adolescence – what is perhaps the most definitive point in our lives – is to just "be ourselves." Telling him to be himself as if it were the simplest thing to do is the last thing the adolescent wants to hear. Not only is what it means to be himself precisely what the adolescent is trying to determine, but the existential gravity of doing so, having realized that he himself is responsible for deciding what he is to make of himself, is as daunting as it is definitive.

To say that this crossroads is definitive is to realize that alienation, no less than authenticity, emerges as a concrete possibility at this critical point in our lives. Alienation becomes a possibility, and authenticity thus becomes precarious, when we attempt to escape the fuller dimension of human selfhood that emerges as the need for self-constitution is existentially realized. Lonergan points out, for example, that the most common means of escape is to assiduously erase self-consciousness: "How much simpler to pour oneself out in 'worthwhile' external activity

¹⁴Lonergan, "The Subject," 27.

¹⁵Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," 223.

¹⁶Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," 224.

and, if praise and blame must be administered, then administer them not to oneself but to others.”¹⁷ Walker Percy agrees and adds that this method of avoidance invariably involves some measure of immanence.¹⁸ By immersing ourselves within the everyday, whether it be via consumerism or some other form of absorption, we erase the consciousness we might otherwise achieve regarding our selves. Thus, “the compliant role-player and consumer and holder of a meaningless job, the anonymous ‘one’ – German *man* – in a mass society, whether a backfence gossip or an Archie Bunker beer-drinking TV-watcher.”¹⁹ Such is the form the alienated subject most often takes: the immanently truncated, or *quotidian*, subject. The quotidian subject is the subject who is willing to erase his consciousness of himself rather than face the existential realizations a heightened awareness of himself would incur; and who is alienated from himself as a result of his willingness to do so.

It is quite possible to move in the other direction with equal zeal, however, and try to escape the existential challenge of self-constitution by hypostasizing self-consciousness rather than erasing it. This strategy serves the same purpose as immanence in that the challenge of authentic self-making is avoided rather than embraced. Percy claims that transcendence, every bit as much as immanence, is a common strategy of escape.²⁰ By surpassing our selves via a medley of transcendent endeavors, such as science, art, and, yes, even philosophy, we seemingly escape the gravitational pull exerted by the selves of which we are conscious. Rather than immersing ourselves in the everyday so as to erase the consciousness we have of them, we transcend ourselves by engaging in activities which, by heightening our consciousness to the degree that it becomes hypostasized, seemingly enable us to maintain an orbit above the everyday world. “The pleasure of such transcendence derives not

¹⁷Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, vol. 3, *Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 622.

¹⁸Walker Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1983), 113.

¹⁹Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 113, emphasis-his. Kierkegaard agrees as well, adding that it is impossible to describe the self thus erased, or *finitized*, outside of the comic. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 33 and 54.

²⁰Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 113-26.

from the recovery of self but from the loss of self."²¹ The result is the *surpassing* subject — the subject who is willing to hypostasize his consciousness of himself rather than be the self of which he is conscious; and who is also alienated from himself as a result of his willingness to do so.

This latter form of escape is not unique in the sense that no less than the quotidian subject, the surpassing subject loses himself. But because the surpassing subject does so according to the same means by which Lonergan would have us appropriate ourselves — by heightening our consciousness — it becomes necessary to expand Lonergan's account of the alienated subject to include the surpassing subject. Although self-appropriation involves the "bloody entrance" into the realm of theory, those who have effected this crucial entrance might be more alienated from authentic living than those who have not.²² Such is sadly the case because the heightening of consciousness that characterizes self-appropriation is precisely what surpassing subjects turn to in order to escape the existential challenge of self-constitution. As Lonergan also argues, however, the best way to engage in the existential self-reflection whereby such alienation is overcome is to open wide the doors to a philosophy of concrete living in its historical unfolding. There is perhaps no better way to open these all-important doors than to turn to literature, whose characters are often concrete embodiments of human living in its historical, as well as tragic and/or comic, unfolding.

REFLECTIONS IN THE FUNHOUSE

Because the challenge that leads to the surpassing subject is one that is oftentimes most poignant for those facing it for the first time — adolescents — I will explore this form of alienation by turning to a work of fiction that concerns just such an adolescent, John Barth's short story, "Lost in the Funhouse."²³ In Barth's story, a thirteen-year-old boy named

²¹Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, 124. Again, Kierkegaard agrees, referring to the self thus surpassed as having been *volatilized*. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 31.

²²Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 85.

²³John Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," in *Lost in the Funhouse* (New York: Anchor Press, 1988), 72-97.

Ambrose travels with his family and a female neighbor to the beach on Independence day. There is a sense of adult seriousness to Ambrose's every move, which reveals that although he is caught within the throes of puberty, this youngster is wise beyond his years. Barth tells us, "Ambrose was 'at that awkward age.' His voice came out high-pitched as a child's if he let himself get carried away; to be on the safe side, therefore, he moved and spoke with *deliberate calm* and *adult gravity*."²⁴ Struggling as he is through puberty, Ambrose feels it is crucial that he remain on the safe side of who he is. He does so by relying on select strategies: "talking soberly of unimportant or irrelevant matters and listening consciously to the sound of your own voice are useful habits for maintaining control in this difficult interval."²⁵ And so the "safe side" of himself is his consciousness, and what he gets "carried away" to, should he allow himself, is the self of which his consciousness is conscious – the insecure self who is overly concerned with what others think of him, the confused self who is as attracted to girls as he is frightened by them, and the awkward self who wears glasses and whose undeveloped body is going through a number of increasingly embarrassing changes. Letting himself get carried away must be avoided, therefore, because doing so reunites Ambrose with the pubescent self from which his consciousness seemingly insulates him – the self which, unlike his self-consciousness, is the unsafe side of his existence.

Being the youngster he is, however, Ambrose faces situations that not only encourage, but actually require, getting carried away to the self that even his self-consciousness does not enable him to completely evade. "They were all standing before Fat May the laughing Lady who advertised the funhouse. Larger than life, Fat May mechanically shook, rocked on her heels, slapped her thighs while recorded laughter – uproarious, female – came amplified from a hidden loudspeaker. It chuckled, wheezed, wept; tried in vain to catch its breath; tittered, groaned, exploded raucous and anew. You couldn't hear it without laughing yourself, no matter how you felt."²⁶ You couldn't help laughing,

²⁴Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 72, emphasis-his.

²⁵Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 72.

²⁶Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 79.

that is, unless you were a pubescent adolescent like Ambrose for whom Fat May's invitation to laughter, just because it is an invitation to getting carried away, is nothing short of a nightmare. Speaking of Ambrose's fifteen-year-old brother and the pretty fourteen-year-old neighbor accompanying their family to the beach, Barth writes, "Peter suggested then and there that they do the funhouse; he had been through it before, so had Magda, Ambrose hadn't and suggested, his voice cracking on account of Fat May's laughter, that they swim first."²⁷ Though it buys him some time, Ambrose's adult wisdom ultimately pales in comparison with the *self-assurance* of the slightly older Peter and Magda, especially since both have already been through the funhouse before. In fact, the mere prospect of navigating the funhouse is enough to carry Ambrose back to his awkward self with its cracking voice. Knowing he is not going to escape his predicament, Ambrose goes for broke: With incredible nerve and to everyone's surprise he invited Magda, quietly and politely, to go through the funhouse with him. "I warn you, I've never been through it before," he added, *laughing easily*; "but I reckon we can manage somehow."²⁸ Despite surprising everyone else, Ambrose still needs to talk himself into the funhouse because he knows that getting carried away to the self his consciousness insulates him from will be anything but amusing.

Speaking to himself more than to Magda, Ambrose weakly reminds himself that the important thing to remember, after all, is that its meant to be a *funhouse*; that is, a "place of amusement," and takes the plunge, entering the funhouse along with Peter and Magda.²⁹ The ticket-woman, witchlike, mortifying him when he inadvertently gave her his name-coin instead of the half-dollar, then unkindly calling Magda's attention to the birth-mark on his temple: "Watch out for him, girlie, he's a marked man!"³⁰ Ambrose is marked indeed. He's the only patron in the funhouse for whom its very name is unsettling rather than titillating. And with good reason, for "composure vanished at the first pitch: Peter hollered

²⁷Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 80.

²⁸Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 90, emphasis-his.

²⁹Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," emphasis-his.

³⁰Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 92.

joyously, Magda tumbled, shrieked, clutched her skirt; Ambrose scrambled crabwise, tight-lipped with terror . . . Shame-faced he saw that to get through expeditiously was not the point."³¹ Silent with terror and shamed by his lack of awareness regarding the whole point of the funhouse, Ambrose resists its comic offerings with still further transcendence: "He took Magda's elbow to steady her against revolving discs set in the slanted floor to throw your feet out from under, and explained to her in a calm, deep voice his theory that each phase of the funhouse was triggered either automatically, by a series of photoelectric devices, or else manually by operators stationed at peepholes."³² Despite his heightened and ingeniously manipulated self-consciousness, Ambrose still lacks a basic appreciation for what is designed to be a house of getting carried away, and so of fun.

As such, Ambrose's experience within the funhouse is fated to be tragic rather than comic. "Stepping from the treacherous passage at last into the mirror-maze, he saw once again, more clearly than ever, how readily he deceived himself into supposing he was a person. He even foresaw, wincing at his dreadful self-knowledge, that he would repeat the deception, at ever-rarer intervals, all his wretched life, so fearful were the alternatives. Fame, madness, suicide; perhaps all three."³³ Ambrose finds himself wincing in the mirror-maze because it pierces him with the devastating truth that far from enabling him to do so in a safe manner, his self-consciousness is itself what prevents him from being a self at all! It is his very attempt to be the consciousness he has of himself rather than the self he is conscious of that tragically prevents young Ambrose from being a self. If Barth's story were a comic as opposed to a tragic one, Ambrose's self-knowledge might be shared with another person, perhaps with another lost youngster who avoids self-consciousness as assiduously as Ambrose pursues it, but who would likely be enough of a comedian to say "good to know we both got it wrong" as he continues along the maze in the direction his own little vortex of despair takes him. The solitary nature of Ambrose's realization portends an altogether different ending to

³¹Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 92.

³²Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 93.

³³Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 93.

Barth's story, however. "As he wondered at the endless replication of his image in the mirrors . . . as he *lost himself in the reflection* that the necessity for an observer makes perfect observation impossible . . . he heard Peter and Magda chuckling somewhere together in the maze.³⁴ While Peter and Magda chuckle, Ambrose remains tragically lost among his own reflections. "He stood quietly while the two young people giggled and thumped through the glittering maze, hurrah'd their discovery of its exit, cried out in joyful alarm at what next beset them. Then he set his mouth and followed after, as he supposed, took a wrong turn, strayed into the pass *wherein he lingers yet.*"³⁵ Unlike Peter and Magda and the other fun-lovers for whom the funhouse is fun, Ambrose lingers in what tragically remains a place of fear and confusion for him.

IN FLIGHT FROM THE SELF

Why does Ambrose remain lost, however, once he has the realization which, precisely because it reveals his *self*-deception, would seemingly empower him to find his way out of the mirror-maze? Despite its having so contributed to the dilemma he has identified, Ambrose seeks immediate refuge within his self-consciousness and so responds to his dilemma with additional transcendence. Rather than embrace the comic dimension of his admittedly devastating realization, Ambrose insulates himself from the dreadful self-knowledge the funhouse offers by accusing its designer of lacking the requisite knowledge of funhouse design. "He envisions a truly astonishing funhouse, incredibly complex yet utterly controlled from a great central switchboard like the console of a pipe organ. Nobody had enough imagination. He could design such a place himself, wiring and all, and he's only thirteen years old. He would be its operator: panel lights would show what was up in every cranny of its cunning of its multifarious vastness . . ." ³⁶ Even though he is lost in a funhouse whose design, far from lacking imagination, has him beat, Ambrose surpasses his all-too-tragic self by becoming a designer of

³⁴Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 94, emphasis-his.

³⁵Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 95, emphasis-his.

³⁶Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 97.

funhouses himself, thus avoiding the all-too-comic experience of getting lost in another funhouse. Doing so is an illusory escape, however, that leaves Ambrose with a future which is fated to be as desperate as it is tragic. "He wishes he had never entered the funhouse. But he has. Then he wishes he were dead. But he's not. Therefore he will construct funhouses for others and be their secret operator — though he would rather be among the lovers for whom funhouses are designed."³⁷ And so the comic illusions funhouses employ in order to confuse their patrons ultimately pale in comparison to the tragic illusions Ambrose is willing to believe so as to avoid being the self that not even his self-consciousness enables him to evade. Though he possesses a vivid imagination that seemingly provides a way out of his dilemma, Ambrose is possessed by a desire to control, which prevents him from realizing that the imagination needed for funhouse design is a comic, as opposed to a tragic, one. He is as misled by the fantasy of control as he is by the illusions of transcendence. Rather than being among the fun-loving lovers for whom funhouses are designed, young Ambrose is fated to be a transcending funhouse designer who, although he might secretly control everything in the funhouses he designs, tragically lacks the authenticity to step foot in any one of them himself.

Although Ambrose evokes our pity in that he is as befuddled by adolescence as he is lost in the funhouse, he simultaneously evokes our fear since we realize that his loss is no less self-inflicted, and thus tragic, than Oedipus' loss of Thebes. The irony that makes Ambrose's tragedy even more poignant is that he is never more lost in the funhouse than when he decides to become a funhouse designer. Though he remains literally lost in the mirror-maze as the story ends, he is metaphorically lost to a greater degree because far from inspiring him to act on the dreadful self-knowledge they hold, the mirrors lead Ambrose to further alienate, and thus lose, himself in reflection. What makes mirror-mazes so much fun for most people is just what makes them so very dreadful for Ambrose. Surrounded by mirrors, he is lost among reflections of himself and doesn't know which way to turn. Rather than prompting a good laugh, this experience leads Ambrose to recognize how tragically

³⁷Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 97.

alienated he is from himself. Of all things, mirrors reveal how readily he deceives himself into supposing he is a person, because unlike most people Ambrose uses reflection, and more specifically self-consciousness, to surpass himself. Whereas other people find the experience of getting lost among their own reflections unusual, and so fun, doing so is how Ambrose goes about being, and thus alienating, himself all the time. He regularly and purposefully does to himself precisely what the mirrors do to him, and so far from leading him to chuckle, the mirrors lead Ambrose to wince in pain, a pain not unlike that felt by Oedipus when the identity of the stranger on the road becomes clear. Like Oedipus, the pain Ambrose feels is infinitely worse because the wound behind it is a self-inflicted one. Ambrose strives to be his self-consciousness rather than being the self of which he is conscious, and thereby tragically alienates, rather than authentically constitutes, himself.

His decision to become a funhouse designer is a definitive one in a long string of inauthentic choices that perpetuate this tragic trend and that thereby ensure that Ambrose might design and control, but will never have fun in, funhouses. Even Ambrose can foresee that he will have to repeat his already habitual self-deception at ever-rarer intervals throughout the rest of what will become a wretched life because the alternative will become more and more frightening, and so more and more unapproachable. Neither fame, madness, or suicide are this crucial alternative, however; they are the by-products of not facing what is the even more frightening alternative for Ambrose: being the self his self-consciousness alone cannot authentically constitute. The specific course this future will take is painfully apparent to Ambrose, even at the age of thirteen: he will become the world's greatest funhouse designer. Although incredibly complex, his funhouses will be "utterly controlled" by him to the point that "a switch-flick would ease this fellow's way, complicate that's, to balance things out; if anyone seemed lost or frightened, all the operator had to do was."³⁸ Was what? What would he do in such a case? The tragic answer is not only that Ambrose still doesn't know, but that he will not know, even once he has designed the most perfect funhouse the world has ever seen. For "even the designer and operator have forgotten

³⁸Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 97.

this other part, that winds around on itself like a whelk shell.”³⁹ The part he has already forgotten as he imagines his future as a designer is his self – the part that winds around behind self-consciousness, and which is as necessary as it is vulnerable. Although his self-deception will have to be repeated at rarer intervals because as his self-consciousness constitutes more and more of his identity there will be less and less of a self there to be deceived, Ambrose cannot fully erase his self without simultaneously erasing his self-consciousness. He must be a self in order to be *self*-conscious. Short of doing away with his self – itself one of the possibilities he foresees – Ambrose will secretly operate perfectly designed funhouses for others who are authentic enough to go through them chuckling. “There was some simple, radical difference about him; he hoped it was genius, feared it was madness, devoted himself to amiability and inconspicuousness.”⁴⁰ Ambrose is, as he hopes, radically different due to his genius, but it is the genius of tragic madness.

THE INESCAPABILITY OF SELF-RELATION

Ambrose’s attempt to resolve the existential challenge of self-constitution by hypostasizing his consciousness in this manner is tragic because it is informed by a flawed understanding of human self-consciousness. Since the consciousness he has of himself seemingly enables him to evade the self of which he is conscious, Ambrose assumes that self-consciousness is fundamentally *separative*, as opposed to *unitive*, in character. Far from merely separating us from the selves we are conscious of, however, self-consciousness also crucially unites us with the selves we are conscious of and in so doing reveals a unique and inescapable relationship we all have with ourselves. We are conscious of, and thus in relation to, the selves we are conscious of; and we are the selves we are conscious of, and so in relation to, the consciousness we have of ourselves. Neither our consciousness nor the selves we are conscious of exhaust the reality of human selfhood. We are neither the consciousness we have of ourselves, nor are we the selves we are conscious of, because we are both at one and

³⁹Barth, “Lost in the Funhouse,” 83.

⁴⁰Barth, “Lost in the Funhouse,” 89.

the same time. As selves, we relate to our consciousness of ourselves; as conscious, we relate to the selves we are conscious of. Doing both at the same time is what it means to be in the unique relationship we term selfhood. It is, therefore, as impossible for us to escape the selves we are conscious of being as it is to escape being the consciousness we have of ourselves.⁴¹ It is impossible to do either because we *are* the relationship between the two — as selves, we are fundamentally constituted as such. In order to be self-conscious we must be the selves we are conscious of, and in order to be selves, we must be self-conscious. Being a self is at one and the same time the condition for the possibility of, and the very condition made possible by, self-consciousness.

Although he clearly uses the truth that he must be self-conscious in order to be a self to his advantage, Ambrose's tragic story decidedly underscores the truth that he must also be the self of which he is conscious in order to be self-conscious. Such is the case because even if his ingeniously manipulated self-consciousness separates him from the self he is conscious of, it is undeniably true that it also unites Ambrose, even if for the briefest of moments, with the tragically alienated self he truly is. Until he devises the response of becoming a funhouse designer, Ambrose is literally face-to-face with his tragically alienated self. Although it lasts for only the briefest of moments, this encounter between Ambrose as self-conscious, and as the self of which he is conscious, crucially highlights not only the existence, but also the power, of the unitive dimension of self-consciousness. In this brief moment, as his consciousness unites him with the tragically alienated self he normally uses the separative dimension of self-consciousness to avoid, Ambrose gains self-knowledge that is devastating, and thus powerful, enough to alter the entire course his life will take. Not only is it possible for the consciousness he has of himself to unite him with the self of which he conscious, but this unitive dimension is powerful enough to definitively inform the decisions Ambrose makes. To deny this dimension of self-consciousness is therefore as mistaken as to

⁴¹Selves are, as Kierkegaard so eloquently shows, the relation that relates itself to itself, and thus "a person cannot rid himself of the relation to himself any more than he can rid himself of his self, which, after all, is one and the same thing, since the self is the relation to oneself." Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 17.

deny its ability to inform our decisions regarding the self-knowledge it makes available to us.

Not only is the dreadful self-knowledge Ambrose gains made available to him by the unitive dimension of self-consciousness, this dimension plays an even more profound, if not tragic, role in his self-constitution than it might seem. For the reason Ambrose turns to the separative dimension of self-consciousness to surpass himself is precisely because the unitive aspect of self-consciousness makes his tragically alienated self all-too-available to Ambrose in the first place. He becomes conscious of himself in a way that does not at all separate him from, but rather unites him with, the tragically alienated self he is before Ambrose decides to surpass it via the transcendence of funhouse design.⁴² He adopts this surpassing vocation only after his consciousness briefly unites him with the tragically alienated self which devastates Ambrose with the dreadful self-knowledge that he is thus alienated. In this sense, the unitive dimension of self-consciousness is even more profound than its separative dimension. Inasmuch as it brings him face-to-face with the tragically alienated self he truly is, Ambrose's unitive consciousness of himself deepens his lived experience as a self to a degree that no amount of separation can ever fully erase. Although in his case it is an all-too-painful deepening, it is one which, if taken to heart, whether comically or spiritually, would portend an altogether more authentic future for young Ambrose.

THE PRIMACY OF THE EXISTENTIAL

The narrator of Barth's story, who is as self-conscious a narrator as Ambrose is a teenager, tells us that "one reason for not writing a lost-in-the-funhouse story is that either everybody's felt what Ambrose feels, in which case it goes without saying, or else no normal person feels such things, in which case Ambrose is a freak."⁴³ It is important to keep in mind, though, that surpassing subjects are no more freakish than

⁴²Such is the tragic genesis of Ambrose's unique form of *misrelation*, or despair, which Kierkegaard refers to as *inclosing reserve*. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 17 and 63.

⁴³Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," 91.

quotidian ones. Both are alienated from themselves in potentially tragic ways, but their forms of alienation are understandable, if not unfortunate, responses to the existential challenge self-constitution poses. We can all relate to Ambrose inasmuch as we have all faced this challenge, especially in its most poignant moments during adolescence, and have since responded. His lost-in-the-funhouse story does not go without saying, however, especially from a Lonerganian perspective, because it reveals that self-constitution by way of transcendence can be every bit as alienating as by way of immanence. Just as the quotidian subject loses his self-consciousness by immersing himself within the everyday, the surpassing subject loses his self by transcending it via his self-consciousness. Neither response to the challenge of making ourselves what we are to be as selves is authentic because both overvalue the separative aspect of self-consciousness, thereby minimizing its unitive character. In fact, both the quotidian and surpassing subject respond as they do precisely in order to escape the truth that self-consciousness properly unites us with the selves we inescapably are, and are inescapably conscious of being.⁴⁴ And so the attempt to escape either facet of selfhood is tragic insofar as it is impossible and inauthentic inasmuch as it is self-alienating.

The Subject ends with the alienated subject rather than the existential subject because Lonergan wants to guard against the misappropriation of the existential subject whose primacy he establishes. The primacy of the existential is not the primacy of results, nor is it even the primacy of willing over knowing; it is the primacy of consciously making ourselves what we are to be as selves over raising our level of consciousness in terms of our knowing alone. Doing the latter is not equivalent to doing the former because self-constitution is a matter, not of knowing, nor even of doing, but rather of doing informed by knowing. The four levels of human consciousness are united, and not merely separate, for this very reason. It is precisely because the higher levels cannot properly function except in conjunction with the lower levels that the higher levels complete the lower ones by preserving as well as resolving them. Rational self-

⁴⁴Thus, "generally speaking, consciousness—that is, self-consciousness—is decisive with regard to the self." Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 29.

consciousness goes well beyond rational consciousness, but is rational only insofar as it retains the previous three levels it completes in the process. Therefore Lonergan's assertion that human consciousness emerges at its fullest at the fourth level of rational self-consciousness cannot mean that the existential subject should disregard the first three levels in the name of existential self-constitution.⁴⁵ Just because the levels of consciousness are united as well as separate, the attempt to disregard questions pertaining to knowing in favor of those pertaining to doing does not reflect the primacy of the existential but is rather a crude distortion of it. Thus the alienated subject is an inauthentic subject who, even when he attempts to establish authenticity as the guiding ideal of existentialism, is still ironically neglecting that which he seeks to authenticate. The alienated subject reminds us that when the functional interdependence of the existential and the rational is obscured, the primacy of the existential is misappropriated. The primacy of the existential is the primacy of concrete human living in its historical self-unfolding, a self-unfolding which, unless it forms a unity with the three levels of human consciousness that precede it, is inauthentic.

The surpassing subject is a crucial addendum to the alienated subject because it reminds us that the primacy of the existential is also misappropriated when we use our self-consciousness to escape being the selves of which we are conscious. Just as the levels of human consciousness are distinct such that it is possible to separate one level from the other, our consciousness of ourselves and the selves we are conscious of are separate to the degree that we can distinguish one from the other. Nonetheless, the four levels of consciousness are simultaneously interrelated to the degree that we cannot adequately appropriate ourselves unless we appropriate ourselves as the unity these levels form when taken together.⁴⁶ Similarly, the consciousness we have of ourselves and the selves of which we are conscious are interrelated to the degree that it is impossible to adequately appropriate ourselves without appropriating the selves of which we are conscious, and not simply, or primarily, the consciousness we have of ourselves. Because this self is

⁴⁵Lonergan, "The Subject," 79-86.

⁴⁶Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 265.

given in consciousness, and because self-appropriation is the indirect process in which we heighten our consciousness, it is tempting to approach self-appropriation in terms of raising our consciousness of ourselves rather than in terms of being the selves of which we are conscious. Insofar as the latter necessarily involves the former in order for self-appropriation to be adequate, the existential subject who casually brushes aside cognitional theory, epistemology, or metaphysics in the name of authenticity is an inauthentic, and therefore alienated, subject.

Because consciousness-raising can itself be used to escape the existential challenge posed by self-constitution, however, the surpassing subject is a trap to which practitioners of transcendental method are equally susceptible. No less than the existentialist Kierkegaard who does not completely evade the problem of the alienated subject due to his never having adequately integrated existential with cognitional subjectivity, Lonergan's intellectualist existentialism does not completely evade this problem either. It is, ironically enough, possible to lose ourselves in the very attempt to appropriate them, if we appropriate our consciousness of ourselves rather than the selves of which we are conscious. Doing so is more tempting than not given the fact that the heightening of consciousness Lonergan encourages us to engage in is as intellectualist as it is existential. Thus what Kierkegaard considers the greatest hazard of all — losing the self — can unfortunately occur, even in the very midst of self-appropriation, and do so quietly enough to make it seem as if nothing happened. Losing our selves in this way is as ironic as Ambrose's losing himself in the funhouse is tragic. Never the ironist, Lonergan does not *completely* evade the problem of the alienated subject because although he carefully guards against the existentialist who would renounce the first three levels in the name of authenticity, Lonergan does not anticipate the equally alienated intellectualist whose inadequate appropriation of these same levels with regard to the self of which he is conscious can just as easily inauthenticate his existential self-appropriation. When his treatment of the alienated subject is expanded to include the trap of the surpassing subject, however, it results in a more authentic, and so adequate, account of existential self-appropriation, an account made

possible, ironically enough, by the primacy of the existential that Lonergan himself establishes.

AN INESCAPABLY PRECARIOUS REALITY

Just as the transition from the neglected and truncated subject to self-appropriation is a matter of conversion, the transition from rational consciousness to rational self-consciousness is a personal philosophic experience.⁴⁷ Our consciousness emerges at its fullest at this crucial juncture, however, only if it unites us with the selves of which we are conscious — the selves whose existential constitution is from that moment forth a historical self-unfolding that is as inescapable as it is precarious. It is for this reason that each of us must go beyond merely being conscious of ourselves as practitioners of transcendental method to being the selves who can be as existentially engaged *in* this radical process as we are *by* the mysteries which awaken it. Doing so requires letting ourselves get carried away to the vulnerable selves of which we are conscious, regardless of how tragic and/or comic they may be. Being authentic, rather than alienated, existential subjects demands nothing less of us. That we can do so means that the philosophy of consciousness, although hypostasized by some thinkers, is not for that reason alone exhausted. Such is the case because the self-relation of the subject *as* subject that lies at the very heart of Lonergan's philosophical anthropology is both a precarious and an inescapable reality. Habermas is right to remind us that the self-relation of human subjectivity, and so the philosophy of consciousness, are precarious. Both are for this reason in perpetual jeopardy of falling prey to the alienation of mis-relation. Jeopardy and exhaustion are not the same, however. The reason the philosophy of consciousness is not exhausted is because the self-relation of the subject *as* subject is an inescapable relationship. Human subjectivity thus remains as inescapably vulnerable to authenticity as it is to alienation. Although this is an admittedly precarious state, it is nonetheless our inescapable lot in life as self-relating human subjects.

⁴⁷Lonergan, "The Subject," 79.

The reason Habermas concludes that the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted is because he mistakenly assumes that *whenever* we as knowing subjects turn back upon ourselves, we do so in order to “lay hold of ourselves as objects.” Although such is often, and throughout the history of philosophy has often, been the case, the spontaneity of conscious life need not withdraw from our self-reflections anymore than the philosophy of consciousness need be exhausted simply because it is often, and through the history of philosophy, has often, been hypostasized. The most significant of Lonergan’s numerous breakthroughs in my mind – his breakthrough to the subject as subject – is such inasmuch as it reveals that precisely because we can and do access ourselves as subjects, self-consciousness is indeed an original phenomenon from which the spontaneity of conscious life need not withdraw. The very notion of the subject as object Habermas alludes to is, Lonergan argues, itself possible only because an even more original form of presence is available to us. We must first be present to ourselves as subjects in order for anything (including ourselves conceived of as objects) to be present to us. The spontaneity of conscious life is thereby ensured by the subject as subject – the original reality that serves as the condition for the possibility of the subject as object. This lived reality is as threatened by the purported demise of the philosophy of consciousness as it is by the surpassing subject. Such is the case because like the notion of the subject as object which Habermas uses to support it, the conclusion that the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted results from a misappropriation of human subjectivity, and more specifically, from a mis-relation between self-consciousness and the self of which it is conscious. Far from precluding the existential self-reflection that properly retains the spontaneity of conscious life, and thereby makes authentic selfhood possible, self-consciousness radically unites us with the selves we are conscious of in a way that deepens our lived experience as selves, and thus renders the self-relation of human subjectivity less precarious.⁴⁸

⁴⁸I would like to thank Jerry Miller and J. P Shortall for their inspiration, encouragement, and advice regarding earlier drafts of this article.

CAN WE THEMATIZE MYSTICISM?

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WHILE CLAIMING THAT their experience is ineffable, many mystics have talked about it. Some of them, such as Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross, have even written hundreds of pages describing, analyzing, and situating that experience. However, the vast majority of them have remained content to live with this paradox – speaking about the unspeakable – either unwilling to discuss it or incapable of explaining it intellectually.

Let us note the fact that mysticism is not a blank state of mind, a blackout, or a passing out. Mysticism involves consciousness and awareness. If mystical experience were not a conscious event, no human being would have ever talked about it. If it could not be recalled, no one would have been able to consider it as distinct from our common sense, scientific, or artistic endeavors. But if you regard mysticism as something different from those endeavors, then you make a statement that conveys a content, namely, a minimum of knowledge. It follows that mysticism is not entirely unknowable. Mystical consciousness is a kind of knowing, which our memory can store and which our intellectual curiosity may want to understand. And yet, it is a peculiar sort of knowing, a strange form of understanding, a higher wisdom, which seems to defy linguistic enunciation. As Thomas Merton puts it, “the mystical theologian faces the problem of saying what cannot really be said.”¹

¹Thomas Merton, foreword, *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing: A Modern Interpretation*, by William Johnston (2d ed., St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1975), viii.

As a result, it is far from obvious that mysticism can be successfully brought to speech. Perhaps it is impossible to test the validity of religious accounts, which are shaped by preconceptions and thus do not escape the subjectivistic idiosyncrasies of individual mystics as well as of their particular traditions. Perhaps it is impossible to distinguish between adequate and inadequate expressions.

In order to unravel this issue, I propose that we successively tackle six questions. First, among the available formulations of mystical experience, would it be helpful to distinguish two basic genres? Second, can we track the consequences of the various epistemologies operative in the study of mysticism? Third, what does the realm of mystical consciousness consist in? Fourth, what are the principal modern views on ineffability? Fifth, can mysticism be articulated? And sixth, if so, to what extent?

1. EXPRESSIONS OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

When we take cognizance of the vast amount of mystical literature across human cultures, we notice that mystical consciousness is enunciable in some way. Even prior to any elaborate expression, there is a minimum that is always asserted. This minimum consists in the affirmation that mysticism is different from other, more familiar, kinds of consciousness: commonsense, artistic, scientific, historical, psychological, or philosophical.

A person may go farther than this bare minimum and begin to describe the mystical experience, as one confides in a friend or in a psychologist.² Those who are at ease with symbols may evoke a transcendent experience in a poem, a story, a play, a dance, a musical piece, a painting, a sculpture, a temple endowed with architectural

²As is well-known, Teresa of Avila was requested by her spiritual counselors to write an extended and detailed report of her spiritual journey. More recently, the psychiatrist Karlfried Graf Dürckheim used to encourage his patients to talk about what he called their "experiences of Being." See Louis Roy, *Le sentiment de transcendance, expérience de Dieu?* (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 14, 31, 129-30.

expressiveness, and so forth.³ Those who are concerned with dogmatic orthodoxy may sort out norms derived from their own religious tradition in order to confirm the truth of mystical experiences. Those who enjoy pursuing questions in a logical fashion may try to analyze the elements of mystical experience, subdivide it into phenomenological types, employ hermeneutical tools to disclose its meaning, or have recourse to epistemology so as to appraise its objective validity.

These various expressions fall into two basic genres. First, oral or written descriptions of experiences, which may display a definite literary beauty, or works of art that purport to convey the sense of the divine. And second, literary, historical, doctrinal, philosophical, or theological discussions of mystical texts or phenomena.

The first genre – the symbolic – conveys meaning by having recourse to images, comparisons, metaphors, and analogies, along with concrete events, details, circumstances, and allusions. Although it often possesses a general scope, symbolic meaning is embodied in the particular. The validity of these concrete forms of expression can be determined thanks to the traditional criteria for discernment, with which spiritual guides are conversant.

By contrast, the second genre – the systematic – which is theoretical, aims at directly presenting the universal and does so by defining a set of organically related concepts. This is what I will call thematization, that is, objectification, methodical knowledge, explanatory account. Assessing its desirability is the principal issue I want to take on in this essay. The complex theological status of the functional specialty that Lonergan calls “doctrines” will not be tackled in this article, which will remain within the limits of the philosophy of religion. If I understand “doctrines” correctly, it partakes of some characteristics of the symbolic and of some characteristics of the systematic, and thus plays the role of a transition between foundations and systematics.⁴

³See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 278: “artistically differentiated consciousness, especially if joined to religious sensibility, heightens religious expression.”

⁴*Method in Theology*, 295-99, 306-08.

2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF VARIOUS EPISTEMOLOGIES IN THE STUDY OF MYSTICISM

In the scholarly world of studies on mysticism, we find, either explicitly or implicitly, three fundamental views: naïve realism, idealism, and critical realism.⁵ Those in the first camp (who, of course, usually do not see themselves as naïve!) consider perception to be the paradigm of knowledge. They construe mystical experience not as sense perception, but as some sort of inner perception, immune from any interpretation. For them, the reality of mystical experience can be affirmed to the extent that it satisfies conditions similar to those found in sense perception. As an intellectual effort to confirm this authoritativeness, thematization merely consists in showing that it resembles sense perception.⁶

Partisans of the second camp accept the Kantian assertion that knowledge is intrinsically shaped by space and time as well as by the essential categories of human understanding. According to them, the reality of religious experience is the *noumenon*, which remains outside the forms of intuition and categories of understanding and is, therefore, inaccessible and radically unknowable. For instance, Rudolf Otto extols what he calls the strictly ineffable “numinous,” and he drastically undervalues religious language, whose role is limited simply to evoke the unknown numinous. Yet, in an effort to avoid extreme idealism, he adopts a certain perceptualism as he speaks of a faculty that perceives the numinous.⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher offers the same contradictory blend of idealism and perceptualism, although he avoids the mistake of

⁵These categories come from *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). A very helpful application of those categories to the field of mystical theory is made by James Robertson Price III, “The Objectivity of Mystical Truth Claims,” *The Thomist* 49 (1985): 81-98.

⁶This position is exemplified in William J. Wainwright, *Mysticism: A Study of Its Nature, Cognitive Value and Moral Implications* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981) and by William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). On the former, see Roy, “Wainwright, Maritain, and Aquinas on Transcendent Experiences,” *The Thomist* 54 (1990): 655-72.

⁷On Otto, see Louis Roy, *Transcendent Experiences: Phenomenology and Critique* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), ch. 7.

postulating in us a distinctive faculty for the divine.⁸ Similarly, Karl Rahner considerably diminishes human knowing as he contends that the divine mystery will be unknown to us even in the beatific vision.⁹

The adherents of these two fundamental positions share something in common: conceptualism. Conceptualism means some sort of automatic imposition of concepts onto experience, without the mediation of inquiries or direct or reflective insights. For conceptualists there is no *emmanatio intelligibilis*. It is almost a mechanical operation, by which we organize our obscurely pregiven thoughts.¹⁰ If you transfer this epistemological stance to mysticism – a transfer that strict empiricists would disapprove of, but that naïve realists and some Kantians would approve of – then the divine is reduced to what is religiously experienced, while confessional doctrines are valid only inasmuch as they reflect religious experience. Moreover, dogmas are likely to be downplayed as the results of a process of abstraction that presumably impoverishes the vivid direct contact with the mystery. In this framework there can hardly be a conceptual knowledge of religious reality that one would have good reasons to hold as true.

The third fundamental position is critical realism, grounded in the self-knowledge that makes adequate cognitional theory possible. What becomes of the concept in this epistemological account? The concept is the product of previous abstraction, which disregards many irrelevant aspects in the data and singles out the important elements for a possible answer to a specific question.¹¹ You get an insight when you detect the significant

⁸See Louis Roy, "Schleiermacher's Epistemology," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 16 (1998): 25-46.

⁹See Louis Roy, "Rahner's Epistemology and Its Implications for Theology," in *Lonergan Workshop*, ed. Fred Lawrence, vol. 18 (Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College, 2003).

¹⁰See *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) and Roy, "Rahner's Epistemology."

¹¹*Insight*, 55. In his 1868 paper entitled "On a New List of Categories," §5, Charles Sanders Peirce writes that "abstraction," which he also calls "prescision," requires "attention to one element and neglect of the other" (Peirce's italics). See *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992-1998), vol. 1 (1867-1893), 2.

point that sheds light on an issue. Conceptualization follows insight as an elaboration of the relations grasped in the act of understanding. Far from being impoverishing, abstraction, insight, and conceptualization are enriching. In this intellectually vibrant context, thematization of mysticism can play a useful role, as we shall see.

3. MYSTICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AS A REALM OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Nonetheless, even a sound cognitional theory does not guarantee that we can effectively reflect upon mysticism. We must take into consideration mysticism's peculiar nature and honestly determine whether it is amenable to any form of objective study. So we still have to come to grips with additional questions, such as: Can we identify a domain for mysticism within the range of human experience? Or, to put it in a more provocative manner: what is it that we are either forbidden or permitted to talk about? Is it possible to outline the "what" of mysticism? Is there a particular field that encompasses mystical events, experiences, or objects? Is mysticism a specific area within the overall spectrum of the knowable? Or does the originality of mysticism rather reside in the fact that it is *not* a part of ordinary human knowledge?

Bernard Lonergan distinguishes four realms of meaning: common sense, theory, interiority, and transcendence.¹² Each of them corresponds to a specific mode of conscious and intentional operation. What gives rise to each basic mode of operation is an exigence, or a goal. So the goal of common sense is to act appropriately in our world of everyday interactions; the goal of theory is to relate systematically aspects of the known reality; the goal of interiority is self-knowledge; and the goal of transcendence is to respond to the offer of unrestricted love and meaning.

In the first two realms, we deal with objects, which are perceived as sense data, understood in insights, verified in judgments of fact, and affirmed in judgments of value. Such realities are either encountered (in

¹²*Method in Theology*, 81-85, 257, 265-66; at 272-73. Lonergan adds two other realms of meaning, namely, scholarship and art: both use the language of common sense to pursue distinctive goals.

the realm of common sense, namely, in the *Lebenswelt*, the "lived world" of concrete feelings, apprehensions, decisions, and actions), or systematically interconnected by our mind (in the realm of theory, that is, in all the sciences, natural and social, as well as philosophy and theology).

In contrast to the first two realms, the other two realms deal, not with sense data, but with the data of human consciousness. Thus the third exigence – self-knowledge – opens up the realm of interiority, in which we identify our recurrent conscious acts and states. And the fourth exigence – adopting a stance with regard to what absolutely transcends us – ushers us into "the cloud of unknowing."¹³ In this fourth realm – a second type of interiority – we are concerned with conscious states that are at the same time analogous to and different from the ordinary conscious states found in the first interiority and analyzed by cognitional theory.

This twofold self-knowledge (acquired in the first and in the second interiority) is based on a direct attentiveness to the data of our consciousness. The first two realms are characterized by the mediation (that is, interpretation) of immediate sense data, whereas the other two realms stem from the mediation of immediate consciousness itself. Each of these latter realms – interiority and transcendence – involves a certain kind of immediacy, prior to becoming explicitly thematized.¹⁴ The awareness of that immediacy entails a shift to a new key, to which common sense and theory have no access.

To describe the fourth realm of meaning, Lonergan uses words such as "transcendence," "religious experience," and "religious interiority."¹⁵ In light of this latter designation, I have called it the second interiority, to indicate that it underlies our subjectivity, namely, our first interiority. Let us also notice that by "transcendence," Lonergan means neither the

¹³*The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counseling*, ed. William Johnston (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973). Notice the references to *The Cloud* in *Method in Theology*, 29, 266, 342.

¹⁴For an amplification of Lonergan's notion of "mediated immediacy," with references to *Method in Theology* and *Insight*, see *Transcendent Experiences*, 137-39 and 176-78.

¹⁵See *Method in Theology*, 105-07, 266, 290; correspondingly, the third realm is called "other interiority" (266).

Transcendent (God) nor other instances of self-transcendence. For him, the realm of transcendence designates *full* self-transcendence, where the “being in love with God” constitutes “the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality.”¹⁶

Moreover, for Lonergan, religious experience consists in “a conscious dynamic state of love, joy, peace,” which “is conscious without being known.”¹⁷ This definition of religious experience (which typifies the realm of transcendence) refers to a human state that in itself is not known. However, following Bernard McGinn’s remark that the term “consciousness” is a more precise category than “experience,” I propose that we rather speak of “mystical consciousness.”¹⁸

McGinn considers Christian mysticism in its primary sense as “an immediate consciousness of the presence of God” but also highlights the importance of observing its interconnectedness with the rest of human experience, as he writes: “everything that leads up to and prepares for this encounter [between God and the human], as well as all that flows from or is supposed to flow from it for the life of the individual in the belief community, is also mystical, even if in a secondary sense.” He adds, “the mystical element in Christianity is that part of its belief and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God.”¹⁹

In light of McGinn’s suggestions, I propose a distinction between mysticism and mystical consciousness.²⁰ The latter is the “religious experience” (in Lonergan’s vocabulary) that makes up the core of the realm of transcendence. The former covers more ground: it includes not only mystical consciousness but also the set of meanings and values that come both before and after mystical consciousness. As construed by its

¹⁶*Method in Theology*, 105; see 342: “Such an orientation [to transcendent mystery] ... is the climax of the self-transcending process”

¹⁷*Method in Theology*, 106.

¹⁸Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), xvii-xviii.

¹⁹*Foundations of Mysticism*, xvi and xvii.

²⁰I am indebted to Rev. Harvey D. Egan, S.J. for this distinction and for useful comments on a previous draft of this article.

best experts, mysticism incorporates several interpretive contexts.²¹ Consequently it carries with it significant elements drawn from the realms of common sense, theory, and interiority. Needless to say, mystical consciousness may permeate these three other realms. In contrast to transcendent experiences, which are transitory, mystical consciousness tends to be pervasive and permanent.²² This is the reason why it can permeate all the rest of human life.

4. MODERN VIEWS ON INEFFABILITY

Let us now approach the main objection to the thematization of mystical consciousness. Given its peculiar nature, which is neither a matter of common sense nor a matter of theory, and hence not a knowledge as people normally understand it, should we not abandon the very idea of thematizing it?

I must stress that the thematization in question is about mystical consciousness, not about its "object" or "objective," namely, God. The Neoplatonic tradition, both ancient and medieval, does not differentiate human language regarding God and human language regarding mysticism. Lonergan's perceptive comments on the metaphysical rendering of Thomas Aquinas's overall epistemology apply to the study of mysticism in particular.²³ Although patristic and medieval literatures display wonderful expressions about mysticism, they are not sufficiently

²¹In addition to McGinn, see Harvey D. Egan, *Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990). On the other hand, it is unhelpful to include too much in the rubric "mysticism"; for all practical purposes, one then equates it with the whole spiritual life – the sole difference being that the mystic takes it more seriously than the average believer. Thus, in *Mysticism* (New York: Dutton, 1961), ch. 4, Evelyn Underhill adopts too broad a definition of mysticism. Egan is on better ground when he refuses to identify mysticism with "a Christian life of ascetical piety and devotion" or "simply love of God, the interior life, or Christian religious experience in general" (15).

²²For more on these distinctions, see Louis Roy, *Mystical Consciousness: Western Perspectives and Dialogue with Japanese Thinkers* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003), esp. introduction.

²³See *Verbum*, esp. ch. 1, conclusion.

reflexive, that is, they do not explicitly reflect on religious experience as distinct from Christian doctrine in general.

With modernity, the interest in the human self becomes dominant. At first, several factors such as the disparagement of religion by the opponents of the churches and the mistrust of quietism by the Catholic institution seem to have precluded any non-polemical study of mysticism. It is only at the dawn of the nineteenth century, namely, with Schleiermacher, that we are offered a systematic account of religious experience. Although he rarely speaks of *Mystizismus* (which he sometimes rejects and sometimes accepts in a qualified manner),²⁴ large sections of his *Speeches*, his *Dialectic*, and his *Christian Faith* have to do with what we would nowadays consider mysticism. Unfortunately, by failing to distinguish between two forms of prereflective consciousness, namely, between mystical consciousness and the consciousness that permeates all our states and acts, he does not ask *to what extent* the former might be objectified. Yet, because he sees a role in “objective consciousness,” I would not place him among the proponents of utter ineffability.²⁵

William James and Rudolf Otto are the chief Western proponents of the thesis that religious experience is irreducible to any sort of discourse. Among James’s four marks of any mystical experience, the first one is “ineffability.” He asserts:

The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of mind as mystical is negative. The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others. In this peculiarity mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect.

Of course his work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, from which this quotation comes, is full of reports of mystical states. But the only role of such accounts consists in *evoking* the mystical states in the sensibility of those who read those texts. He continues:

²⁴See “Schleiermacher’s Epistemology,” 26, n. 4.

²⁵See *Mystical Consciousness*, ch. 6

No one can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling, in what the quality or worth of it consists. One must have musical ears to know the value of a symphony; one must have been in love one's self to understand a lover's state of mind. Lacking the heart or ear, we cannot interpret the musician or the lover justly.

All the same, in his second mark of mysticism, "noetic quality," James recognizes the presence of a certain "knowledge." Yet again, such intuitions are not amenable to any rational translation. "They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect."²⁶

Otto, who by and large appreciates *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, also adopts the thesis of ineffability. His version is more rigorous than that of James. He speaks of "the numinous," a term that comprises both mystical experience (the sense of the sacred) and the experienced reality (the Wholly Other). We seem to be back to the premodern lack of distinction previously mentioned. But in fact the context is different: it is Kantian. Otto's numinous is as unknowable as Kant's *noumenon*. Because we do not know the nature of the numinous, we cannot even introduce the distinction: experience/object of experience.

Despite this lack of distinction, Otto's book evidences a modern focus on experience. And for him the experience of the numinous is unique, incomparable. Its "quite specific element ... remains inexpressible ... in the sense that it completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts."²⁷ It can only be evoked for the reader thanks to a "schema" or "ideogram" whose function consists in making the numinous imaginable by being associated with something in the natural world. Still, this evocation has no scientific (or conceptual) validity, according to Otto's Kantian epistemology.²⁸

²⁶William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. Martin E. Marty (1902; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1985), 380; or the critical edition in *The Works of William James* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 302.

²⁷Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 2d ed., 1950), 5. In his foreword to the first English edition, he uses the Latin phrase "Numen ineffabile."

²⁸For a more detailed analysis, see *Transcendent Experiences*, ch. 7, esp. 109-16.

Another important thinker who discusses the problem of ineffability is W. T. Stace. In *Mysticism and Philosophy*, a work that is better argued than James's and Otto's books, he distinguishes between an inexpressible "pure experience" and its many interpretations. He claims that "introvertive mysticism" (finding ultimate Unity within the soul) is pure experience and therefore mysticism par excellence. On the other hand, "extrovertive mysticism" (finding the One as shining through the multiplicity of external material objects) is reducible to the former. Finally, "theistic mysticism" is heavily theory-laden and therefore is most remote from pure experience.²⁹

As regards the status of our language on mystical consciousness, Stace must be praised for having distinguished two aspects of the issue. He successively asks: Is mystical experience beyond logic and hence paradoxical? And, is it beyond understanding and hence ineffable? He answers yes to his first question, and no to his second.

He tackles the first question in chapter 5 of his book. After trying to refute four theories devised to explain away the paradoxical nature of mystical writings, he settles for a division of human expression into two domains, the sphere of paradox and the sphere of logic. He concludes that it is not illogical, even for scholars who inevitably think according to the logical laws of ordinary consciousness (elsewhere called "sensory-intellectual," in contrast to mystical consciousness),³⁰ to accept the fact that a part of our human experience stands above those laws. I agree with this latter statement, although not with his assertion that paradoxical phrasings cannot be translated into coherent ones. At stake is the validity of systematic language, as we shall see later. Yet if the British are right when they say that "the proof of a recipe is in the pudding," I can refer to a recently published article, where I believe I have successfully articu-

²⁹W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1960), ch. 1, section 5, and ch. 2, sections 5-8. For critical remarks on those three categories, see Roy, *Transcendent Experiences*, 167-68.

³⁰W. T. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics: Being Selections from the Great Mystics and Mystical Writings* (New York: A Mentor Book from New American Library, 1960), 12-14, 237-38.

lated, in logical discourse, a few of Meister Eckhart's paradoxical pronouncements.³¹

In chapter 6 Stace tackles the issue of the alleged ineffability. Unfortunately he fails to distinguish the language of religious experience from the language on the object of that experience (God). Had he concentrated on the former, his treatment would have been less broad and probably more precise. Nevertheless, he makes a few important points.

He rightly claims that the mystics' difficulty with words does not reside in the depth of their emotions or in the spiritual blindness of their readers. It is an intellectual difficulty, which consists in the incommensurability between their mystical consciousness and their ordinary consciousness. Of course, mystics successively partake of both kinds of consciousness. And as they express their consciousness of a fundamental unity, they cannot help but employ ordinary language, which is based on relating many terms, hence on multiplicity.

Another valuable contribution of Stace to the debate is his contention that mystical language cannot be entirely symbolic or metaphorical. Introducing a helpful distinction between meaningful and meaningless metaphors, he maintains that the meaningfulness of the metaphors depends upon "literal" words. If not, we should ever be asking, "Metaphors for what?" and thus be involved in an infinite regress. Symbolic language, Stace rightly asserts, must be grounded on some nonmetaphorical apprehensions, however inadequately or awkwardly expressed. As examples of non-metaphorical words, he lists difference and similarity (or at times, causality) between the world of multiplicity and the world of unity, or between the universe and God. Stace points out that several mystics have recourse to both symbolic and literal terms. They go beyond metaphorical language every time they use abstract words such as "unity" and conversely when they claim that, in their experience, "multiplicity" is obliterated. He also gives examples of literal concepts employed by mystics: "no distinctions," "void," "undifferentiated," "nothing," "nothingness," and several other terms.³²

³¹See Louis Roy, "Some Japanese Interpretations of Meister Eckhart," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 11 (2001): 182-98.

³²*Mysticism and Philosophy*, 299-302.

Lastly, taking his cue from Plotinus (in *Ennead V.3.17*), Stace notes that during the experience itself mystics are in a state of total ineffability. But afterwards, when the experience is remembered, they have recourse to words in order to contrast the two kinds of consciousness. In sum, Stace correctly states that the experience itself is above understanding, although it is possible to conceptualize the experience in our logical language. He remains vague, however, about the exact nature and extent of such thematization.

5. THE POSSIBILITY OF THEMATIZATION

In reply to James and Otto, the partisans of total ineffability, let us observe that, in order to persevere in meditation, mystics must make two judgments, a judgment of fact and a judgment of value, regarding their experience. The first one is, "this experience is unique, different from anything else"; the second is, "I need to be unconditionally faithful to this experience." Notice that there is nothing paradoxical in these statements, which are expressed in plain idiom. Of course, the words in which these judgments are couched vary enormously from culture to culture. Even though countless mystics probably never share these judgments with other people, the fact that they had to utter them, however succinctly, as they talk to themselves, shows that mystical consciousness is never purely ineffable. As soon as mystical experience becomes self-aware, it comprises a kernel of meaning, an elementary knowing (as distinct from knowledge in Lonergan's fuller sense, where some degree of elaboration is indispensable).

Still, many mystics stop here. They observe and recommend silence. Lao Tzu sternly states, "Those who know do not say; those who say do not know."³³ Is it advisable to follow their example and resist the temptation of loquacity? Could it be a sign of profound wisdom to reject the modern Western hubris of trying to objectify mysticism? Perhaps we should unmask this enterprise as an illusion and modestly confine

³³Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1963), 117, §41.

systematic understanding to the sciences that deal with the finite universe, thus expelling philosophy and theology from that field. Perhaps we should rally to Ludwig Wittgenstein's interdiction, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereon one must be silent."³⁴

If, on the one hand, the objection merely implies that any formulation is less rich than mystical consciousness itself and therefore should not be considered a substitute for it, we must concur. On the other hand, given what has been said about the enriching character of abstraction, we should not concede that the systematic handling is less rich in all respects. Yet the private character of an individual's or a group's experience can never be adequately rendered conceptually. Only the symbolic approach is capable of alluding to its uniqueness in a suggestive fashion. Still, even the symbolic remains at a remove from the private aspect of human experience.

This issue becomes intractable when interpreters of mysticism fall into the hermeneutical pitfall of lamenting the fact that human language, whether symbolic or conceptual, cannot literally reproduce the unique features of a specific experience as it happened. Such interpreters ignore the enriching character of expressions. Even at its symbolic stage, language suggests commonality, not pure privacy: its analogical resources allow its hearers or readers to have a share in the uniqueness of an event that is both particular and paradigmatic. Moreover, the systematic treatment can situate this particularity in a universally valid context, provided it employs a useful set of terms and relations.³⁵

Several years ago, Paul Ricoeur noticed this difficulty:

My experience cannot directly become your experience. An event belonging to one stream of consciousness cannot be transferred as such into another stream of consciousness. Yet, nevertheless, something passes from me to you. Something is transferred from one sphere of life to another. This something is not the experience as experienced, but its meaning. Here is the miracle. The experience as

³⁴Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), Number 7; I have translated "darüber" by "thereon" instead of "thereof."

³⁵On this issue, see *Transcendent Experiences*, 174; also Louis Roy, "Interpersonal Knowledge According to John Macmurray," *Modern Theology* 5 (1989): 349-65, esp. 363.

experienced, as lived, remains private, but its sense, its meaning, becomes public. Communication in this way is the overcoming of the radical non-communicability of the lived experience as lived.³⁶

There are natural transitions between mystical consciousness, its symbolic rendering, and systematic inquiry about it. Christians who have tasted the mystery are attuned to biblical statements such as “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30), “I am” (John 8:28), “Anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Cor 6:17), or “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Their *lectio divina* oftentimes issues in spontaneous re-expressions of those most profound truths. In doing so, those listening to the word of God are gently introduced into webs of meaning. Moreover, many of those prayerful people raise certain questions, the answers to which necessitate a coherent frame of reference. Thus Paul Ricoeur writes that “le symbole donne à penser,” “the symbol gives rise to thought” (“to thinking” would be a better translation of “à penser”).³⁷ *Fides quaerens intellectum*, “faith seeking understanding,” cannot rest idle.

6. THE SCOPE OF THEMATIZATION

Nowadays, many theologians urge that we remain content with what I have called the first genre of expressions – the artistic one.³⁸ They insist that we should not transgress the boundaries of the symbolic. We ought to give up systematic thinking, they claim, because the latter necessarily loses the powerful allusiveness of the former. That the systematic cannot do what the symbolic can do, I readily admit. But why oppose the symbolic and the systematic? Do they not pursue distinct, complementary

³⁶Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 16.

³⁷Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 348.

³⁸For example, some proponents of narrative theology; for an excellent discussion, see Paul Griffiths, “The Limits of Narrative Theology,” in *Faith and Narrative*, ed. Keith E. Yandell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 217-36.

aims? I reported Stace's observation that even mystics go beyond the symbolic when they use abstract words that imply systematic relations.

At any rate, those who reject the systematic contradict their own proposal, since their thesis and the reasons they adduce lie in the genre, not of symbolic expression, but of systematic thought itself. Most of the time, behind their stance we find a misrepresentation of systematic thought, which they construe in a conceptualistic manner. By contrast, if we adopt an epistemology that focuses on insights, we are in a position to apply it flexibly to the realm of the mystical. Then, systematic thematization will be experienced, not as impoverishing, but as enriching, because it will outline, in a manner that is different from symbolic language, the significant in mystical consciousness and the point in any religious text. It can do this by pruning the unintended free associations to which non-systematic writings are prone and by highlighting the cognitional discoveries in an unequivocal way.

Let me repeat that the goal of both the symbolic and the systematic forms of expression is not to duplicate or replace mystical consciousness. The latter is immediate, since it belongs in the realm of the second interiority, whereas speech takes us into the world mediated by meaning. The challenge of thematization, then, consists in "theorizing," that is, in systematically understanding and relating our data of consciousness. At this stage, we try to situate the manifold aspects of our prelinguistic consciousness within the linguistic world mediated by meaning.

Lonergan clearly considers "the objectification ... of religious experience" feasible.³⁹ Yet neither Lonergan nor I in this essay have thematized it in any detail. I have been sharpening his "upper blade" in the "scissors movement with an upper blade in the categories and a lower blade in the data."⁴⁰ Elsewhere, however, I have brought some of the data of the lower blade in interaction with the transcultural base of the upper blade.⁴¹

³⁹*Method in Theology*, 266.

⁴⁰*Method in Theology*, 293.

⁴¹In *Transcendent Experiences*, ch. 1, 2, 9, and 10, and in *Mystical Consciousness*, passim.

In the limited context of this article, I will content myself with adding three methodological remarks. First, let us keep in mind the distinction, introduced in section 4, between reflection on God and reflection on mystical experience. While human talk about God is marked by a relative (not total) *inadequacy*, the study of our approach to God is marked by a relative (not total) *adequacy*. The fact that we cannot capture the divine mystery does not entail that mystical consciousness, which is our experience of that mystery, cannot be at least partially understood and appropriately expressed.

Second, given that both our science of interiority and our science of mysticism have to do with the data of consciousness, their basic terms must be, not metaphysical, as in medieval theology, but psychological, that is, derived from self-knowledge.⁴² Because of this intimate connection between the third and the fourth realm, I would submit that the philosophical self-knowledge gained in our exploration of interiority is a prerequisite for any talk about mysticism.⁴³ If we successfully objectify the diverse facets of our ordinary consciousness, this achievement will help us successfully objectify the data of our mystical consciousness.

Third, since mystical consciousness appears to be utterly simple, having no parts enunciable as discrete objects, it follows that it would be futile to try and differentiate several aspects of it.⁴⁴ Consequently, I would contend that its thematization amounts, not to analyzing it into constituent elements (since it has no constituent elements), but to relating it to the other realms of meaning. For example, we can examine how particular instances of common sense, theory, and interiority influence our awareness of mystical consciousness and are influenced by this awareness.

⁴²See *Method in Theology*, 343. In *Heightened Consciousness: The Mystical Difference* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), David Granfield successfully builds upon this suggestion made by Lonergan.

⁴³See *Mystical Consciousness*, ch. 1 and 2.

⁴⁴See the section "Price on Bare Consciousness," in *Mystical Consciousness*, ch. 3.

CONCLUSION

The study of mysticism needs the wide-ranging expressions offered by literature, the arts, religious studies, philosophy of religion, and theology. Our understanding of the mystical life does not come unilaterally from within. It is also guided, from without, by the great religious texts and traditions of humankind. The formulation of mystical consciousness is no luxury.⁴⁵ We need it because we are human beings who want to understand the whole spectrum of our experience. We are endowed with what David Tracy calls a "blessed rage for order."⁴⁶ We live in a world mediated by meaning, hence in a world that proves intellectually satisfying insofar as the human mind finds order in it.

Moreover, the forms of expression that pertain to the symbolic genre can benefit enormously from sound philosophy and competent theology. Artists and writers need an adequate interpretive frame of reference for their expressions to be more than solipsistic ejaculations or wild speculations. Just compare, for example, Dante, John of the Cross, or Gerald Manley Hopkins on the one hand, with William James, Aldous Huxley, or Alan Watts on the other hand.

Finally, intelligent reflection upon mysticism is required not only if we are to situate it within our differentiated world of meaning, but also if we are to exercise discernment among the multitude of symbolic accounts, human studies, philosophies, and theologies that are competing in the effort to win adherents over to their respective views. The new science of mysticism that has progressively emerged in the course of the twentieth century, and that might flower in the twenty-first, will have to

⁴⁵In *The Meaning of Christ: A Mahayana Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), John P. Keenan highlights the implications, for a new science of mysticism, of an approach based on both conscious interiority and listening to sacred scriptures. He finds a helpful interiority analysis in Chinese Yogacara Buddhism. While Keenan and I do not quite agree on the exact nature of thematization, we both affirm its usefulness. He writes, for example, "Asanga thematized awakening as undefiled purification ... attained within a consciousness that has become purified from passionate clinging and imaginative knowing" (216).

⁴⁶David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*, with a new preface (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

face the task of dialectically appraising varied counterpositions and of strengthening its fundamental position.

ACCEPTANCE AND ACTUALIZATION: THE TWO PHASES OF MY HUMAN LIVING

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INTRODUCTION¹

Undoubtedly the writings for which Bernard Lonergan is best known are *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957)² and *Method in Theology* (1972).³ In his own studies of Lonergan, Frederick Crowe has argued that those writings are respective products of two distinct periods in the development of Lonergan's interests, an earlier period when he is concerned above all to examine understanding and knowing, or "mind," and a later period when his paramount interest is the study of feeling and loving, or "heart."⁴ On this division, *The Subject* (1968)⁵ is an important milestone in Lonergan's shift from the earlier to the later period. The essay clearly articulates such later-period themes as

¹I presented an earlier version of this paper at the 17th Annual Fallon Memorial Lonergan Symposium, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, 22-25 March 2001. The focus of the symposium was Lonergan's 1968 essay, *The Subject*, and themes emerging from it.

²*Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 5th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1957 [Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992]).

³*Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972).

⁴See, for example, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 52-55; cf. 5-12, 55-70, 98-105, 345-55.

⁵*The Subject* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1968); reprinted in Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 69-86.

a transcendental notion of value that stands beyond the notions of intelligibility and reality, an existential level of conscious-intentional operations that stands beyond the three strictly cognitional levels, and the concrete subject's free and responsible self-constitution.

Lonergan's fuller development of the themes of *The Subject in Method in Theology* includes his objectification of *transcendental method*, the concrete normative pattern that characterizes my human living across its entire range of starting points and goals, the four-level pattern of experiencing attentively, understanding intelligently, judging reasonably, and deciding responsibly. The fuller development also includes Lonergan's elaboration of *eight functional specialties*, expressions of the normative pattern of my human living on a more specific range, namely, the living that begins with my encounters of concrete embodiments of meaning and concludes with what I perform or produce in response to such encounters.

The central thesis of my paper is that there is an important differentiation of transcendental method *before* the one that generates the eight functionally specialized methods.⁶ That is to say, the operations that make up my concrete human living, together with their objects, emerge in a normative pattern not only of four levels but also of two phases, an *acceptive* phase and an *actualizational* phase; and just as the pattern of the four levels constitutes *transcendental method*, so the differentiation of the four levels into two phases generates two special methods that may be labeled *acceptive* and *actualizational*, respectively. The eight *functionally specialized investigative* methods, in turn, result from a subsequent differentiation of the normative pattern of four levels and two phases, a differentiation in terms of the proper end of each level in each phase.

My aim is to flesh out this thesis and elucidate its methodological significance in four main steps. First, I will offer a brief review of transcendental method. Second, I will sketch the emergence of acceptive and actualizational methods; and I will suggest how illuminating them can add clarity to a Lonerganian portrayal of transcendental method itself. Third, I will indicate what I take to be the distinguishing traits of the eight functionally specialized investigative methods, the Lonerganian

⁶The priority and posteriority indicated in this thesis are methodical, not necessarily chronological.

reconstitutions of the methods of scholarly and scientific human studies; and I will note a set of methodologically significant but easily overlooked distinctions internal to them. Fourth, I will offer some observations on the method of natural scientific studies.⁷

1. TRANSCENDENTAL METHOD

My *total horizon* comprises (a) my *basic horizon*, the fundamental field within which every determinate element of my awareness stands, plus (b) *every determinate element* of my awareness. Now, in principle an account of transcendental method can begin from various starting points within my total horizon, such as this or that fully determinate element of my awareness (a thing or property of which I am aware), or data of experience (whether of sense or consciousness), or my basic horizon.⁸ In the present account I choose to begin with my basic horizon.

My basic horizon has a subjective pole and an objective pole. The *subjective* pole is my transcendental intending: my *apriori*, strictly heuristic, transcategorical, cognitional and decisional striving. As *cognitional* and *decisional* striving, this intending is both radically self-present and intelligently, reasonably, and responsibly self-constituting. As *transcategorical* striving, this intending is unrestricted in its goal, unlimited in the fulfillment it seeks. It is a yearning to know and choose the totality of whatever is inherently knowable and choosable. As *strictly heuristic* striving, this intending merely anticipates its goal indeterminately, thus far in no way actually achieving it determinately. And as *apriori* striving, this intending is both given and natural. It is the very dynamism of my intentional consciousness, anteceding all my choices and all my cognitional acquisitions.

The *objective* pole of my basic horizon is what the subjective pole prefigures or foreshadows or implies, exactly insofar as it prefigures or

⁷For the distinctions between scholarly studies, human scientific studies, and natural scientific studies, I am drawing upon Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, especially 134-35, 178-80, 201-03, 212, 219, 229-30, 233-34, 248-49, 325, 364-65.

⁸Data of experience and my basic horizon are the ultimate respective "lower and upper blades" of Lonergan's well-known "scissors" of methodical inquiry. (See, for example, *Insight*, 312-13, 522-23, 577-87 [337-38, 546, 600-09]; *Method in Theology*, 293.)

foreshadows or implies it. Hence, just as my transcendental intending is my apriori strictly heuristic transcategorical cognitional and decisional striving, so the transcendental intended is the totality of whatever is inherently knowable and choosable, but simply as prefigured apriori and thus as wholly indeterminate. It is the foreshadowed plenitude of what, if I were to grasp it exhaustively, would completely satisfy my essentially unbounded yearning to know and choose. It is the naturally given but merely implied and thus entirely unspecified integral content that in fact is what I mean, at least operationally, whenever I employ such words as "is," "being," "reality," "is good," "real goodness," and "genuine value."

At this point, let me interject two parenthetical remarks — a substantive observation and a terminological clarification. The substantive observation is that a distinction may be drawn between my *naturally given* basic horizon and my *existential* basic horizon. The former is what has been characterized in the two preceding paragraphs. The latter, by contrast, is the horizon that I actually invoke as basic in my operations of knowing and choosing, the horizon that I effectively employ as the fundamental conscious source of their meaning and the ultimate conscious criterion of their truth and value. Although the two horizons *ought to be identical, they can be different*. For my existential basic horizon is a matter of radical choice, a matter of radical intellectual (and ultimately moral and even religious) conversion or unconversion. I *ought to choose* the naturally given horizon as my existential horizon, but I *remain free to reject* it in favor of something less.⁹ To avoid complexity that would not be relevant to the central purpose of this paper, I assume throughout that my naturally given basic horizon is what I have chosen as my existential basic horizon.

The twofold terminological clarification aims to dispel a confusion that often arises between the Lonerganian senses of "transcendental" and "transcendental method" (which are standard in the present paper) and the senses given those words in a closely related but importantly distinct philosophical tradition. First, for Lonergan the term "transcendental" has the *dual* meaning of (a) "transcendental" in the *Scholastic* sense, namely,

⁹See, for example, *Method in Theology*, 235-44.

“transcategorical,” “not limited to any category,” and (b) “transcendental” in the *Kantian* sense, namely, “apriori,” “pre-empirical.”¹⁰ By contrast, in the writings of Joseph Maréchal and other “transcendental Thomists” such as Karl Rahner and Emerich Coreth, “transcendental” typically has just a *single* meaning, namely, the Kantian one: “apriori,” “pre-empirical.”¹¹

Second, the foregoing difference is reflected in two different senses of “transcendental method.” For Maréchal and his followers, a method is “transcendental” if it is *apriori* in its basis and expectations. On this approach, “apriori method” and “transcendental method” are virtually synonymous. For a Lonerganian, by contrast, a method is “transcendental” if it is not only *apriori* in its basis and expectations but also ultimately *transcategorical* in its scope.¹² On this approach, “apriori method” subdivides. The apriori method whose scope is ultimately transcategorical is “transcendental” method; whereas the apriori methods whose scopes in one way or another are ultimately just categorial rather than transcategorical are “special apriori” methods. As examples of the latter, I propose the acceptive and actualizational methods that I will discuss shortly and the eight functionally specialized investigative methods.

Returning to my sketch of Lonerganian transcendental method, I note that *determinate elements* of my awareness emerge within my basic horizon insofar as I engage in actual knowing and choosing. These determinations are not coextensive with my transcendental intending and intended, whose scope is unlimited. Rather, they are the cognitional and decisional acts and contents that, as a human subject, I actually perform

¹⁰See, for example, *A Second Collection*, 207; *Method in Theology*, 11-14, 282; *A Third Collection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 76, 145.

¹¹See, for example, Otto Muck, *The Transcendental Method* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 60-76, 210, 307-42.

¹²For a recent essay in which (because of the context) I regularly employed the label “transcendental method” in the broader, non-Lonerganian sense, see Michael Vertin, “Transcendental Philosophy and Linguistic Philosophy,” *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 19 (2001): 253-80. (See also Michael Vertin, “La finalité intellectuelle: Maréchal et Lonergan,” in Paul Gilbert, ed., *Joseph Maréchal: entre la critique kantienne et l'ontologie thomiste.* [Bruxelles: Éditions Lessius, 2000], 447-65.)

and achieve, acts and contents whose scope is limited.¹³ That is to say, the determinate elements of my awareness are merely *proportionate*, not transcategorical. These proportionate determinations may be considered in two ways. First, they may be taken simply in terms of the normative, apriori, *pre-empirical* features they possess: the pure-structural, invariant, relatively indeterminate dimensions of the acts and contents of my knowing and choosing. Second, the determinations may be taken in terms of the *totality* of their features – not just normative, apriori, pre-empirical, but also empirical: the structure-complementing, variable, at least relatively determinate dimensions of those acts and contents. My primary concern here and in the remainder of this paper is with the determinations considered in the first way, namely, simply in terms of their normative, apriori, pre-empirical features.¹⁴

Just as within my *basic* horizon the features of the transcendental intended are specified by the features of my transcendental intending, so within my *total* horizon the normative features of the proportionate contents of my awareness are specified by the normative features of my proportionate acts. That is to say, the pure structural features of the proportionate realities I know and choose are prefigured, foreshadowed, fixed in advance, implied by the pure structural features of my proportionate knowing and choosing and, more basically, of me as proportionate knower and chooser. Although no reality I know or choose emerges for me in its empirical fullness apart from my actual concrete knowledge or choice of it, the pure structural features that any such reality would possess are antecedently determined by the pure structural

¹³Throughout this paper, I prescind from religious believing and loving, acts whose ultimate focus is not proportionate but rather transcendent reality and goodness. (For an account of religious experience and how at best it conditions judgments and decisions regarding the transcendent, see Michael Vertin, "Lonergan on Consciousness: Is There a Fifth Level?" *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994): 1-36.)

¹⁴Just as the existential horizon I invoke as basic may differ from my naturally given basic horizon even though it ought not to, so my particular cognitional and decisional efforts and achievements may deviate from the normative pattern of cognitional and decisional acts and contents even though they ought not to. To avoid undue complexity, this paper assumes that what ought to happen not only in the first respect but also in the second respect is what does happen.

features of the cognitional and decisional acts by which I would know or choose it.

What are those normative features? The fundamental Lonerganian answer to this question is not unfamiliar to persons who have studied Lonergan's account of transcendental method. My acts of proportionate knowing and choosing constitute a composite process whose pure structure comprises four levels of conscious-intentional elements: (1) my *attentive experiencing* of data of experience;¹⁵ (2) my *intelligent understanding* of the concrete intelligible unity of those data; (3) my *rational affirming* of the reality of the intelligibly unified data; and (4) my *responsible affirming and choosing* of the goodness of the intelligibly unified data. Correspondingly, each proportionate reality is a composite term whose pure structure comprises four levels of metaphysical elements: (1) what attentively I experience, or *potency*; (2) what intelligently I understand, or *form*; (3) what rationally I affirm, or *act as real*; and (4) what

¹⁵Strictly speaking, transcendental method regards data of experience simply as data of *experience*: differentiation of the latter (for example, into data of *sense* and data of *consciousness*) is a methodically subsequent development.

responsibly I affirm and choose, or *act as good*.¹⁶



Figure 1. The Operational Pattern of *Transcendental Method*

2. ACCEPTIVE AND ACTUALIZATIONAL METHODS

2.1. *Their Emergence*

I contend that the determinate elements of my awareness emerge within my basic horizon not only as acts and contents on four levels, but also in two phases. Adapting and extending a distinction made some forty years ago by Frederick Crowe, let me designate the first phase “acceptive” and the second “actualizational.”¹⁷ The *acceptive* phase includes both acts and correlative contents. The contents make up the proportionate realities *given to me*, the already actual things that I encounter, whether they be objects of the natural physical world or concrete embodiments of human meaning. The acts are the proportionate cognitional operations by which I know those things as actual realities and actual goods, and the proportionate decisional operations by which I consent to them as actual

¹⁶I contend that the distinctions between potency, form (or first act), and act (or second act) are real distinctions, whereas the distinction between act as real and act as good is merely notional. This contention regards both the structure of proportionate realities in general, which is my concern at the present point of this paper, and the structures of proportionate actual and possible realities in particular, matters which I will discuss below in Section 2.1. (For a fuller account of the contention and the reasons for it, see Michael Vertin, “Lonergan’s Metaphysics of Value and Love: Some Proposed Clarifications and Implications,” *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997): 189-219, at 197-205.)

¹⁷Frederick Crowe, “Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas,” *Theological Studies* 20 (1959) 1-39, 198-230, 343-82, 383-95 [Three Thomist Studies (Chestnut Hill, MA: Lonergan Center of Boston College, 2000), ch. 3-6].

goods.¹⁸ The *actualizational* phase follows on the *acceptive* phase, and likewise it includes both acts and correlative contents. The acts are the proportionate cognitional operations by which I know certain things as both possible realities and possible goods, and the proportionate decisional operations by which I choose to actualize those things and then (insofar as I have the requisite freedom, skill, materials, and tools) execute the choices. The contents make up the proportionate possible realities (identically the possible real goods) I *intend to actualize*, the things that become actual realities (and actual real goods) insofar as I succeed in actualizing them.

Now, just as in the context of transcendental method the normative features of the proportionate realities I know and choose are specified by the normative features of my proportionate knowing and choosing, so also in the more differentiated context of specialized *acceptive* and *actualizational* methods do more differentiated versions of the same relations obtain. That is to say, the pure structural features of the proportionate realities I *encounter* are prefigured, foreshadowed, implied by the pure structural features of my proportionate *acceptive* knowing and choosing – and, more basically, of me as proportionate *acceptive* knower and chooser. Similarly, the pure structural features of the proportionate realities I *intend to actualize* are prefigured, foreshadowed, implied by the pure structural features of my proportionate *actualizational* knowing and choosing – and, more basically, of me as proportionate *actualizational* knower and chooser. Although no reality I encounter or intend to actualize emerges for me in its empirical fullness apart from my actual concrete encounter with or *actualizational* intention of it, the normative features that any such reality would possess are specified in advance by the normative features of the cognitional and decisional acts by which I would encounter or intend to actualize it.

What, in greater detail, are those normative features? Not surprisingly, they are more differentiated versions of what I sketched

¹⁸For (a) the argument that what I am labeling the “acceptive” phase concludes with an act of consent or “complacent willing,” and (b) the contention that even evil things merit acceptance (not insofar as they are evil, but insofar as they exist), see Crowe, “Complacency and Concern,” especially 9-19, 203-211, 346-49 [81-91, 118-26, 152-55].

earlier in my brief review of transcendental method. In the *acceptive* phase, my acts of proportionate knowing and choosing constitute a composite process whose pure structure comprises four levels of conscious-intentional elements: (1) my *attentive experiencing* of data of sense or consciousness; (2) my *intelligent understanding* of the concrete intelligible unity of those data; (3) my *rational affirming* of the actual reality of the intelligibly unified data; and (4) my *responsible affirming* of and *consenting to* the actual goodness of the intelligibly unified data. Correspondingly, each proportionate reality I encounter is a composite term whose pure structure comprises four levels of metaphysical elements: (1) what attentively I experience, or *potency*; (2) what intelligently I understand, or *form*; (3) what rationally I affirm, or *encountered act as real*; and (4) what responsibly I affirm and consent to, or *encountered act as good*.

In the *actualizational* phase, my acts of knowing and choosing constitute a composite process whose pure structure comprises four levels of conscious-intentional elements: (1) my *attentive experiencing* of data of sense, consciousness, or imagination;¹⁹ (2) my *intelligent understanding* of the concrete intelligible unity of those data; (3) my *rational affirming* of the possible reality of the intelligibly unified data; and (4) my *responsible affirming* of the possible goodness of the intelligibly unified data, plus my *responsible choosing* to actualize the possible reality and goodness and (insofar as I possess the requisite freedom, skill, materials, and tools) *executing* that choice. Correspondingly, each proportionate reality (identically each real good) I intend to actualize is a composite term whose pure structure comprises four levels of metaphysical elements: (1) what attentively I experience, or *potency*; (2) what intelligently I understand, or *form*; (3) what rationally I affirm, or *intended act as real*; and (4) what responsibly I affirm, choose, and attempt to actualize, or *intended act as good*.

¹⁹Data of sense and data of consciousness are simply given, whereas data of imagination are creative variations and combinations of these. While perhaps most obvious in the actualizational processes of artists, data of imagination play at least some role in the actualizational processes of everyone.

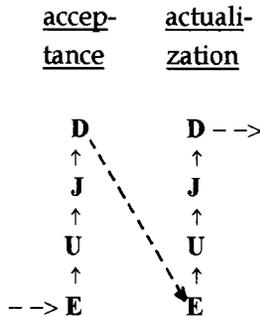


Figure 2. The Operational Pattern of *Acceptive* and *Actualizational* Methods

2.2. The Resolution of a Problem

If the analysis offered in Section 2.1 is correct, then it would seem to provide the means for resolving a problem that I, at least, have long found puzzling. The problem is the character and role of *deciding, choosing, willing*, in transcendental method. What exactly is that problem?

On the one hand, a method that is genuinely transcendental is *transcategorical*: ultimately it regards nothing less than the total universe of intelligibility, reality, and value.²⁰ Now, there is no great difficulty in doing justice to the requisite transcategorical scope of transcendental method if one delineates it as the normative pattern of *knowing*; for knowing is a matter of answering questions, and questions can easily regard not merely the proportionate universe but the total universe. And in fact the later Lonergan often proceeds in just this fashion, delineating transcendental method in terms of the positional answers to the “three basic questions” about knowing, objectivity, and reality.²¹

On the other hand, from time to time Lonergan also includes *deciding* on the list of operations whose normative pattern is transcendental

²⁰Note that it is the *transcategorical* character of transcendental method *as envisioned by Lonergan* that gives rise to the problem I am noting at the present point in my paper. (Recall above, Section 1, and notes 10-12.)

²¹See, for example, “Bernard Lonergan Responds,” in Philip McShane, ed., *Language, Truth and Meaning* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), 307; *Method in Theology*, 20-21, 25, 83, 238-40, 259, 261, 297, 316; *A Second Collection*, 37, 86.

method.²² But the words "deciding," "choosing," "willing," seem immediately to suggest either my delight in this particular actual thing, or my commitment to actualize that particular merely possible thing. Narrowly ethical examples especially abound. And even if I manage to make the scope of my choice coextensive with the universe, I seem inevitably to be faced with the dichotomy between delighting in the universe as it now is, or striving to make the universe what it is not yet but ought to be. In either case the object of my choice seems to lack the universality that would qualify my choosing as truly transcategorical. How, then, can Lonergan maintain that deciding, choosing, willing, *does* pertain to transcendental method?

As I see it, the solution to this problem is that, *precisely as envisaged by transcendental method*, deciding has not yet been differentiated into *acceptive* choosing and *actualizational* choosing (or, in Crowe's terminology, *complacent* willing and *concerned* willing). For deciding follows on knowing, and right deciding approves of what knowing manifests as good. But at the stage of *transcendental method*, what *knowing* manifests as good has not yet been subdistinguished into the good that is *already actual* and the good that thus far is *merely possible*; correlatively, *deciding* has not yet been subdistinguished into the *acceptive* choosing (or *complacent* willing) that simply accepts the good that is already actual and the *actualizational* choosing (or *concerned* willing) that strives to actualize the good that thus far is merely possible. These latter distinctions emerge only with the initial differentiation of *transcendental method* into what I am naming the *acceptive* and *actualizational* methods; and the clear articulation of these two latter methods very helpfully illuminates what has not as yet been distinguished within the former one.²³

²²See, for example, *Method in Theology*, 13-25. Cf. "Bernard Lonergan Responds," 308; and Bernard Lonergan, "Questionnaire on Philosophy," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 2, 2 (1984): 3, 5, 6-7.

²³A detailed discussion that bears directly on these issues may be found in Crowe, "Complacency and Concern," 383-95 [189-203].

3. INTERPRETATIVE INVESTIGATIVE METHODS

3.1. *The Eight Functionally Specialized Methods*

Not everything I encounter becomes a focus of systematic study on my part. On the contrary, probably most actual things I run across are either quickly dismissed or else promptly brought into the service of some concrete goal other than the attainment of systematic knowledge. Again, not all my deeds and products are intended simply to report on the already actual things I have encountered, or even to express them at all. Very often I intend my expressions to indicate mere possibilities, to entertain, to inspire, to condemn, and so forth; and although the contents of such expressions may be influenced by my encounters with actual things, I do not at all intend the expressions as reports on those things.

It remains that if I happen to be a scientific or scholarly investigator, my encounters of things sometimes are indeed systematic studies of them; and many of my expressions, especially linguistic ones, are indeed intended to report what I have come to know about the things I have systematically studied. In the remainder of this paper, unless otherwise indicated, I will be concerned with my concrete living in its acceptive and actualizational phases only insofar as it is what I do as a scientific or scholarly investigator – namely, only insofar as it is a matter of systematically studying things and reporting what I have learned about them.

Next, let me recount what I take to be the specific differentiations of the acceptive and actualizational methods that give rise to the eight *functionally specialized* methods, the *interpretative* methods I employ to the extent that I am an investigator engaged in scholarly or human scientific studies.²⁴ First, insofar as I am operating within the pattern of *acceptive* method, my four-level encounter with things envisages those things *simply as intelligible* – not *as simply* intelligible, but *simply as* intelligible.

²⁴For the sake of terminological crispness, I use “interpretative” to label disciplines that study objects that are not merely intelligible but also *embody human meaning* (or, more broadly, disciplines that study *history*); and I use “positive” to label disciplines that study objects that *are merely intelligible* (or, more broadly, disciplines that study *nature*).

That is to say, the issue of whether they are just intelligible or whether they also somehow embody human meaning has not as yet arisen. Correlatively, insofar as I am operating within the pattern of *actualizational* method, my four-level actualization of expressions intended to report on the things I have encountered intends to report on them simply as intelligible.²⁵

By contrast, when I come to operate within the pattern of an *interpretative* method in its *first* phase, my four-level encounter with things envisages those things not simply as intelligible but *as embodying human meaning*. A single four-level engagement, however, is not sufficient for encountering things embodying human meaning as such; rather, four successive four-level engagements are required. Each of those engagements focusses respectively on the goal proper to one of the four levels, beginning with the first (thus data, meanings, facts, and values); and the normative patterns of these four successive four-level engagements constitute the first-phase methodical specializations named *research, interpretation, history, and dialectic* (FS1-4). Correlatively, when I am operating within the pattern of an *interpretative* method in its *second* phase, my four-level attempt to originate expressions intended to convey what I have learned about the things I have encountered envisages those things not simply as intelligible but as humanly meaningful. A single four-level effort, however, is not adequate for conveying what I have learned about humanly meaningful things; rather, four successive four-level efforts are required. Each of those efforts focusses respectively on the goal proper to one of the four levels, beginning with the last (thus values, facts, meanings, and data); and the normative patterns of these four successive four-level efforts constitute the second-phase methodical specializations named *foundations, policy-making, planning, and execution* (FS5-8).²⁶

²⁵Insofar as they envisage realities simply as intelligible, acceptive and actualizational methods are like transcendental method. Insofar as they distinguish respectively between the actual realities I encounter and the possible realities I intend to actualize, acceptive and actualizational methods differ from transcendental method.

²⁶For Lonergan's account of the functional specialties in theology, see *Method in Theology*, ch. 5. Since the context envisioned by the present paper includes but is not limited to the context of the particular interpretative study that is theology, I have replaced the familiar labels of the last three specialties of functionally differentiated theology (*doctrines, systematics, and communications*) with the labels Lonergan himself

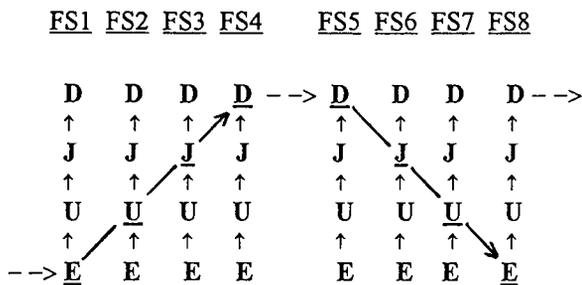


Figure 3. The Operational Pattern of *Functionally Specialized Interpretative Methods*

3.2. An Additional Set of Distinctions

At this point it will be useful to spell out a further set of distinctions, ones that are *internal* to my engagement in interpretative studies. These distinctions are methodologically significant, but they also are easily overlooked. The most obvious of them regards the things I encounter in the first phase of an interpretative study, things I envisage as embodying human meaning. The human meaning I envisage them as embodying may be *my own*, or it may be *someone else's*. More amply, the humanly meaningful things I encounter may be the more or less successful results of a previous originative effort on my own part, an effort to know, choose, and actualize expressions that would successfully embody the meanings I intended them to embody. Or, on the other hand, the things I encounter may be the more or less successful results of originative efforts by one or more other persons. Although the task of interpreting my own expressions undoubtedly is similar in some respects to the task of interpreting the expressions of others, the two tasks also are importantly different. Let us analyze this situation in three overall steps.

First, then, it would seem that skillfully interpreting my own expressions *as actualized* presupposes knowing my own expressions *as intended*.

suggests for the last three specialties of the functionally differentiated general interpretative enterprise "integrated studies." See *Method in Theology*, 365-66; cf. Lonergan, "The Example of Gibson Winter," *A Second Collection*, 189-92.

Suppose, for example, that I encounter an article I have written. In my attempt to know and articulate the meaning the article embodies, a necessary²⁷ condition of success is my knowledge of the meaning I intended the article to embody. For unless I know what I intended, I will be unable to assess the extent to which the words I now see on the pages before me successfully express what I intended them to express.

But a necessary condition of knowing my own expressions *as intended* is knowing *the normative features of my own expressing* – and, more basically, *of myself as expressor*. For a necessary condition of knowing my own expressions as intended is knowing their normative features; and as already pointed out above in Section 2.1, those features are prefigured, foreshadowed, implied by the normative features of my own expressing – and, more basically, of myself as expressor.

Following from the foregoing, the first overall conclusion is that skillfully interpreting my own expressions *as actualized* presupposes knowing *the normative features of my own expressing* – and, more basically, *of myself as expressor*.

Second, by parity of reasoning, it would seem that skillfully interpreting *another person's* expressions *as actualized* presupposes knowing the normative features of *that other person's expressing* – and, more basically, *of that other person as expressor*. For skillfully interpreting another's expressions as actualized presupposes knowing the normative features of her expressions as she intends them; and knowing the latter presupposes knowing the normative features of her expressing – and, more basically, of herself as expressor.

But how do I know the normative features of another person's expressing – and, more basically, of herself as expressor? Only one answer seems possible: *by analogy with* the normative features of *my own* expressing – and, more basically, *of myself* as expressor. The prerequisite of grasping how another person functions at best is grasping how I function at best; then, on the basis of empirical evidence (and thus never with the certainty that is possible in my own case), I impute the pattern of my functioning to that other person.

²⁷Both here and in what follows, a *necessary* condition is not necessarily a *sufficient* condition.

Following from the foregoing, the second overall conclusion is that skillfully interpreting *another person's expressions as actualized* presupposes knowing *the normative features of my own expressing* – and, more basically, *of myself as expressor*.

The third overall conclusion follows immediately from the first and the second: Skillfully interpreting *any expression, whether my own or another's, as actualized* presupposes knowing *the normative features of my own expressing* – and, more basically, *of myself as expressor*.

The foregoing conclusion affirms something that many may find surprising, namely, the necessity of specifically expressional self-appropriation for anyone who would be a systematically skilled interpreter. Moreover, it affirms that necessity as regards interpreting the expressions not only of others but also of oneself. Whether in the broad context of historiography, the narrower context of biography, or the personal context of autobiography, the answer to the question “What am I doing when I am *interpreting* a deed, a text, or a life?” at least operationally presupposes an answer to the question “What am I doing when I am *generating* a deed, a text, or a life?”

4. POSITIVE INVESTIGATIVE METHODS

We may trace two stages in the emergence of the *positive* investigative methods I employ when I am engaged in natural scientific studies.²⁸ The first stage is coincident with acceptive and actualizational methods when their use is restricted to the context of systematic investigation. When I am proceeding as a systematic investigator within the pattern of *acceptive* method, my four-level encounter with things envisages those things *simply as intelligible*: whether they are just intelligible or whether they also somehow embody human meaning is a question that has not as yet arisen. And when I am proceeding as a systematic investigator within the pattern of *actualizational* method, my four-level origination of expressions intended to report on the things I have encountered intends to report on them simply as intelligible. That is to say, in both their acceptive and actualizational phases, the methods operative at this stage are

²⁸Recall note 24.

indeterminately those of positive investigation: they do not treat the things they encounter and aim to express as being more than simply intelligible (namely, as being embodiments of human meaning), but neither do they exclude the possibility that they may be more.²⁹

The second stage in the emergence of positive investigative methods presupposes the emergence of the interpretative investigative methods. For the hallmark of the second stage is that, in both their acceptive and actualizational phases, the methods are *determinately* those of positive investigation: they treat the things they encounter and aim to express *as simply intelligible*. In other words, they do more than refrain from treating things as embodiments of human meaning. They treat them as not embodying human meaning; they exclude their embodiment of human meaning. But a systematic exclusion of human meaning from certain things presupposes systematic knowledge of what is being excluded. And since it is uniquely by means of the interpretative methods that human meaning is systematically investigated, the emergence of determinately positive methods at least operationally presupposes the emergence of the interpretative methods.

In fact, I suggest that the determinately positive methods not only presuppose the interpretative methods but may be viewed as a reductive case of the latter. That is to say, the relation between the interpretative methods and the determinately positive methods is similar to the relation between the Einsteinian mechanics of special relativity and Newtonian mechanics. The equations of Einsteinian mechanics anticipate the respective differences that emerge between (a) mass, length, and time observed in the reference frame of the observer and (b) mass, length, and time observed in another reference frame if the latter is moving relative to the observer at some appreciable fraction of the speed of light. But in the special case where the motion of the reference frame of the observed relative to that of the observer is zero, the equations of Einsteinian mechanics reduce to the equations of Newtonian mechanics. Similarly, the interpretative methods anticipate all the things to be investigated as

²⁹Notice that already at the first stage, let alone the second, positive investigative methods include two phases. For at both stages, the orientation of positive investigative methods is not simply to encounter things but also to report on them.

being embodiments of human meaning. But in the special case where the things to be investigated are not embodiments of human meaning but are simply intelligible, the interpretative methods reduce to the determinately positive methods.

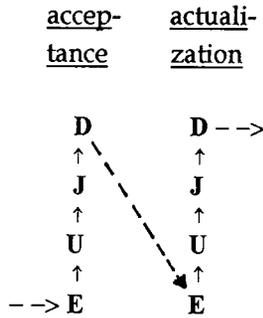


Figure 4. The Operational Pattern of *Determinately Positive Methods*

Now, we have already concluded at the end of this paper's Section 3.2 that my skillful engagement in any interpretative investigation presupposes knowing the normative features of my own expressing – and, more basically, of myself as expressor. But if, as I have just argued, the determinately positive methods are a reductive case of the interpretative methods, or even if the former only presuppose the latter, then it follows that *my skillful engagement in any determinately positive systematic investigation presupposes knowing the normative features of my own expressing – and, more basically, of myself as expressor.*

Many persons will be apt to find that this conclusion runs counter to their expectations, since even determinate positive investigations commonly are thought to be simpler, more primitive, than interpretative investigations. If my analysis is correct, however, the conclusion seems unavoidable: specifically expressional self-appropriation is at least an operational prerequisite for anyone who would be a systematically skilled positive investigator. Or, in other terms, the answer to the question, "What am I doing when I am *determinately knowing the natural physical*

world?" at least operationally presupposes an answer to the question, "What am I doing when I am *generating a deed or a product?*"

CONCLUSION

Let me complete this paper by combining the conclusions of Section 3.2 and Section 4, thus arriving at the following contention regarding systematic investigation in general: *Skillfully engaging in any interpretative or determinately positive investigation presupposes knowing the normative features of my own expressing – and, more basically, of myself as expressor.* That is to say, the answer to the question, "What am I doing when I am interpreting a human deed or product, or determinately knowing the natural physical world?" at least operationally presupposes an answer to the question, "What am I doing when I am generating a deed or a product?" A methodical prerequisite for anyone who would be a systematically skilled interpretative or determinately positive investigator is *specifically expressional self-appropriation.*



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