

Method in Ethics

A Critical Realist View

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Introduction

How We Experience Ethical Reflection

"At a more fundamental level, we may not be *really* disagreeing."

This optimistic remark opens the hatch to a snake pit of problems. When people disagree about what to do, they look deeper for agreement about what standards should apply. If they disagree about the standards, then they look even deeper to method. They ask what role any standards should play in ethical reflection. Even there, they may discover that some think standards should be secondary, and that we ought to look first to the consequences of our choices. Some say we should follow a "natural law" for moral guidance, while others say we should simply carry out our duties.

Now what? Some will think to themselves, "It's too philosophical. I ought to give up." Or "I can handle the philosophy, but all philosophies are closed circles. I shouldn't try to convince you of mine, nor should you try to convince me of yours."

So we hit a dead end. Besides, it's obvious from the history of politics that it will forever be impossible to reach full agreement on what actions earn the title of "right." The best we can do is rely on liberal democratic principles that allow a diversity of opinion, a representative process that lets people voice those opinions, and a case law to prevent harm among people who hold different opinions.

Is that the best we can do? Coordinating diversity tends to ban confrontation. What counts is the greatest number of positions that everyone can agree on, which is mighty few if even one party rejects theoretical thinking, or is an egotist, or has no idea of what love is all about. Talented individuals seek incompatible goals. A practical relativism seeps into social institutions. Sanguine enthusiasm for coordination sours as tolerance trumps challenge.

So when someone like Bernard Lonergan comes along and says that ethics is possible and proposes that a method for determining what's truly good, liberal thinkers dismiss him as another thought-control dogmatist.

But he has a powerful offense, based on an undisputable fact. Notice in the second paragraph above that the parties are driven by a sense that they "ought" to seek common ground. The parties are discussing how they think ethical thinking "should" be done. Even though some reach the conclusion that ethics is impossible, everyone is already *doing* ethics in the discussion. They are at least seeking what is

objectively better, even those who conclude that the "best" they can do is coordinate the diversity.

If you didn't notice it, then you have some idea of how easy it is to contradict what you say by what you do. We can theorize about making ethical judgments without paying attention to what we actually do when we make them.

For example, suppose a moralist says, "As soon as people forget moral principles, chaos results." While this makes grammatical sense, it appeals to consequences to justify an appeal to principles. What the moralist should have said is, "People shouldn't forget moral principles because the first moral principle is not to forget it." But this kind of circular logic sounds silly to other moralists.

We make value judgments before we understand how we make them. This is true of all children and most adults. Then, when we try to understand how we make value judgments we can miss the mark. Many moral philosophers settle for theoretical elegance at the expense of some messy but vital details. They land in that unfortunate state of being thoroughly convinced, thoroughly wrong, and thoroughly unaware of the difference. It's rare to find philosophers who worry as much about *how* they make assessments as they do about *what* they're assessing.

Lonergan's View of Method

Socrates was one of those philosophers. In his dialogs with sophists about bravery and justice, he was not out to confront their conceptual system with a system of his own. He didn't have a system. Nor was he out to prove them wrong about their positions, positions he clearly thought were wrong. Nor was he asking questions to which he knew the answer—a method teachers nowadays mistakenly call "Socratic." His questions were really his questions. He was genuinely bothered about things that confused him. His purpose was to excite their spirit of inquiry. Regarding ethics, he wanted them to face the discrepancy between how philosophers justify their moral teachings and the actual mores of ordinary people. He was less interested in improving their concepts and more in alerting them about the numbing effects of concepts on curiosity.

Lonergan was also one of those philosophers. But unlike Socrates, who was the first to pose the fundamental questions about knowledge itself, Lonergan enjoyed a legacy of some highly significant answers. Just as Aristotle worked out a system for dealing with the questions Socrates could only pose, and just as Aquinas worked out a system for

dealing with the questions an Augustine and Anselm could only pose, so Lonergan worked out a system for dealing with questions that existentialists, empirical scientists, exegetes, historians, and idealist philosophers could only pose. They found the old systems inadequate to deal with human angst, dread, love, failure, power and authority, an economy, the quest for community, hermeneutics, the reliability of historical accounts, a relativity in the human sciences, and a declining respect for truth and value. These questions beg answers that appeal to our intelligence, not our obedience, to our spirit of inquiry, not our need for concepts and definitions, to our readiness to make a better world, not our need for stability.

Lonergan's offense is tactically brilliant. He assumes that everyone makes value judgments. Indeed, anyone who want to dispute this must have made a value judgment that a dispute is worthwhile. He then invites us to notice what we do when we make such judgments. He proposes that any method in ethics should be based on our personal understanding of what we do when we deliberate

Such answers will not be a "system" in the usual sense. Lonergan names such answers a "method," immediately adding that he doesn't mean some A-B-C steps to follow. Rather he means the innate method of how we come to know, to decide, and to love—a method potentially available in all of us but understood by very few. And because we misunderstand them, we fall back on methods that prove to be futile and self-defeating.

The Realm of Philosophic Interiority

By spelling out what we do when we know, decide and love, Lonergan cleared the path into a new realm of meaning, a realm that proposes to ground the formal methods in the realms of science, scholarship, and art as well as the informal methods of mysticism and of common sense.

This is a strange realm of meaning for those of us brought up believing that learning means understanding concepts. It is a strange realm to those teachers who believe that, before anything else, they must first define their terms by genus and species. Lonergan's approach looks first to what lies prior to concepts and explicit definitions. Lonergan has referred to this realm as "philosophic interiority," or just "interiority."

This innate method issues imperatives that move us to pay attention, to ask why and how, to seek out the truth and the most reasonable explanations, to assess which options are better and to act on what we have come to know and value. Lonergan calls these imperatives

"transcendental precepts" because they are the events that move us to transcend the selves that we are to become selves that are more aware, more insightful, more realistic, and more effective in improving the world around us.

As imperatives these precepts form our most fundamental sense of morality. They issue the basic and abiding obligations we have to be better selves by bettering our worlds. Deep within us, we know it is better to notice our surroundings than be oblivious, to understand than to be confused, to grasp reality rather than nurse some myth, to work toward what is better than to involve ourselves in what is worse. So the base of the morality of our actions is not found in some written commandment or in obedience to some authority. It is found in an existential moral imperative for inner consistency among all these ways we transcend ourselves. We would never respect written commandments or obey authorities unless we felt obliged by these inner imperatives.

Don't Act Against Your Better Judgment

At first blush, these imperatives appear as the familiar inner voice that warns us not to act against our better judgment. But upon a closer examination, we find that "our better judgment" is actually a complex of operations that occur on four levels of consciousness.

On the level of concern, there is the judgment that path P1 is better than paths P2 or P3 in situation S1.

Prior to this judgment of value, there is the more recondite judgment that the situation really is S1 and not S2 or S3 and so on. This occurs on the level of explicit knowledge.

Prior to this judgment that affirms that S1 is the real situation are the insights by which we first assemble plausible accounts, A1, A2, A3, and so on. These occur on the level of understanding possible explanations.

And, underlying these insights is the set of operations by which we have gathered the relevant data D1 which, prior to how we understand the data are identical to D2, D3 and so on. These occur on the level where we pay attention to experience.

That is not all. Underneath the familiar precept not to act against our better judgment there are also different kinds of insights by which we assemble the possible accounts of a situation upon which we intend to bring our better judgment to bear. In *Insight*, Lonergan spells out different styles in which insights function—specifically the styles of common sense, of math, of the natural sciences, of the human sciences, and of exegetical and historical scholarship.

There is more yet. On the level of explicit knowledge, there are also different kinds of judgments. We make judgments of fact: "Something happened." We make judgments on the correctness of an explanation: "The fire didn't start by accident." We make judgments on logical coherence: "Adding integers always gives you integers." We make judgments of value: "We should put out the fire."

An Existential Ethics

Regarding judgments of value, Lonergan's account gradually enlarges over the years.

Insight (1957) bears the subtitle, "A Study of Human Understanding." Its focus is cognitional; the base of moral imperatives lies in making our actions conform to intelligence and reason.

With the appearance of *Method in Theology* (1972), Lonergan presents an integral model of the self-transcending subject, a model in which the moral order encompasses the cognitive. Here the base of moral imperatives is a transcendental precept proper to the fourth level of consciousness: Be responsible. Insofar as it encompasses the cognitive, it retains the imperatives to make our actions conform to intelligence and reason. But it contains criteria of its own, namely the imperatives we call the voice of conscience.

Then in "Questionnaire on Philosophy" (1976) he more clearly sets the entire project of cognitive self-appropriation in its full existential context. Self-appropriation ultimately rests on a judgment of the value of unfettered intelligence and intelligent collaboration. This involves learning what we do when we know and when we deliberate, and committing ourselves to setting up an intelligent base for collaboration in the sciences and human studies. Like any existential commitment, cognitive self-appropriation is a moral task. I cannot delegate it. It's up to me alone to determine that it's worth my while to undertake it. He calls this task an "existential ethics."¹

This existential ethics is not a result of the three-plateau ascent through cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics. It is deeply involved at every step in the ascent. At each plateau we commit ourselves to knowing more about ourselves while expanding our understanding of the nature of all reality.

¹ *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 2:2 (October 1984), 1-35, at 5-6, 10, 25, 31, 32.

At the first plateau of cognitional theory, we let ourselves realize what actually happens when we know and deliberate.

At the second plateau of epistemology, we embrace for ourselves the meaning of objectivity when we know and deliberate.

At the third plateau of metaphysics, we make explicit for ourselves our implicit working assumptions about the structures of anything real or good.

From this vantage, we will have not only a clear view of how morality works, but a personal commitment to observing its limits and exploring its opportunities. We will have changed the persons we are. We will have accepted a method. It is a method whose elements are available to almost anyone, but whose operations are confused in practically everyone who hasn't made the climb.

A Methodical Ethics

What kind of method is this?

Loneragan's work here can be found in Part One of *Method in Theology*. He first presents his unique meaning of method. Then he lay out the fundamentals of meaning, of the human good, and of religion. Finally, he conceptualizes the eight interdependent sets of operations that constitute how contemporary theology may be specialized.

(He packs this account so tightly that first-time readers of Lonergan will be baffled. They are not dim-witted. Only the bright will tackle a book like *Method*. They may well understand what Lonergan means by his statement that knowing involves not only experience and understanding but also verifying. But, unless they have verified their understanding of their own experiences of knowing, they will read on, never noticing that they still assume that their understanding is equivalent to knowing.)

In Part Two of *Method* Lonergan focuses on how the eight interdependent sets of operations relate to theology. But here and there he generalizes to include the relationships theology has to philosophy and the human sciences. The last chapter in particular—"Communications" -- deals explicitly with the larger perspectives of social scientists and historians.

Anyone whose existential ethics rests on the cognitional theory, epistemology and metaphysics of Lonergan's critical realism will anticipate that ethics is always moving, yet always retains a permanent core. It is moving because new kinds of situations pop up all the time, followed by new opinions, and, from time to time, new

basic moral standards. What is striking, as well as disturbing, is the realization that the permanent core is people, not principles. This core is only potentially permanent. It actually becomes a permanently reliable, functioning standpoint to the degree that the people in question have become self-appropriated in the sense that Lonergan defines it.

The method, therefore, will have an element of dialectic, to sort out the ways different people are sizing up situations, and an element of foundations, to clarify the ways all people know and deliberate, as well as the ways that knowing and deliberating go awry.

The method will not be a straight-line logical deduction from some philosophical ideal. Rather it will be a circular, spiraling process, working out basic solutions, refining them, and adapting them as new circumstances arise. It will dialectically exclude positions based on confusion about knowing and deliberating. At the same time it will deepen the intellectual and personal foundations of all the parties involved by clarifying the limits and possibilities of all the operations that go into knowing and deliberating.

Our Main Topics

To keep our focus on ethics, I will assume that you have at least a notional assent to the main ideas in *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. Where you have gaps regarding some topics, perhaps my reflections on ethics will encourage you to go back to these works and fill out your understanding. But eventually, you will need to verify your understanding. As J. H. Newman might have put it, you need promote your notional assents to real assents. This happens only in an interaction with real, concrete situations.

I suggest that you think through some moral issue through as far as you can. To use Lonergan's metaphor, studying only his works sharpens only the upper blade of an intellectual scissors.

You may already have been mulling over some moral issue without realizing how deeply important it is to you. All I can recommend is to listen for that *basso continuo* running through your concerns.

Gradually, by bringing your new understanding of yourself to bear on a concrete issue, you will build up true self-knowledge and not merely a Lonergan-knowledge. You will understand Lonergan's distaste for the term, *Lonerganian*, because the method is essentially your own.

My intention here is to select topics from Lonergan's corpus that deal explicitly with ethics. There are gaps, owing mainly to his focus on intellectual self-appropriation in *Insight* and then on theology in *Method in Theology*. Still, his reflections on ethics are easily organized, owing essentially to an ontological equivalence between what exists and what is good.

So I've divided the sections of this essay by generally followed Lonergan's pedagogical layout of topics:

1. Moral Knowledge
What happens when I evaluate?
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What do we present to newcomers?

Keep in mind that ethics is a science. We distinguish it from morality, which is the pattern of everyday decisions we make. Ethics is what gives intellectual grounding to morality. But the science of ethics requires that you remain in the intellectual pattern of experience. So what follows may seem like eating chalk when you prefer chocolate. I can encourage you to pay attention to yourself as you read along, and I can promise you that the effort will be worth your while. But I should also warn you that what you discover will probably shake your solid sense of right and wrong.

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1. *Moral Knowledge*

What happens when I evaluate?

A Cognitive Theory?

Experiments on Ourselves

Lonergan first asks us, his readers, to perform experiments on ourselves. We are to pay attention to what goes on in consciousness when we pose an "ought" question. He addresses how ethical reflection actually works, not how it ought to work. And he explains what happens when it fails to work. He aims to settle some basic judgments of fact before going on to an explanation of how the facts fit together. He expects more than most philosophers insofar as he demands more than a notional assent to the logic of his explanation. He directs us to verify for ourselves what really occurs in a value judgment. That is, these experiments should result in realizations first about ourselves. The first question, then, is, What do I do when I evaluate?

Lonergan proposes these experiments under the heading of a cognitive theory. Let me say a few things about each word.

In *Insight*, it appears that "cognitive" can refer not only to what we know exists but also to what we know is good. So there are not only judgments about truth but about value. Value judgments may be about the worth of what already exists, or about the worth of what might exist, through our efforts.

By "theory," Lonergan means an understanding of how things relate to each other. He repeatedly contrasts this with common sense, which specializes in how things relate to ourselves. A man conducting a theoretical investigation asks what something is, or why it is, or how it works. He's after an intelligibility intrinsic to what he investigates. His attention is focused on data that seem relevant to his question. He has put aside questions about his personal health, his sex life, how he comes across to others, immediate practical applications of what he learns, the beauty of the tree outside his window, or his relationship to God.

Keep this meaning of theory in mind as you read further. You will find yourself slipping out of that pattern of attention quite often. I'm speaking not only of the normal demands of your physical needs and interpersonal concerns. You will also flip out when you pose questions like, How might I apply this in my decision about X? That is, you will

flip into a practical pattern of attention that will seem an imperiously demanding conclusion. It's quite difficult to remain in a purely intellectual pattern of attention, but at least you need to recognize when you flip out and be able to return to the question of theory that started you on this investigation.

Lonergan examines simply what occurs in the mind when we make a value judgment. I say "simply" to suggest that he avoids the circularity involved were he to suggest what "ought" to occur. He just asks his readers to verify in themselves that the events he describes actually occur in the way he describes.

The events that occur, however, are far from simple. An apparently simple statement like "This is a good pen" requires that I understand that this is a pen, how a pen is designed to work, and why people use them. My statement also comes out of a host of affective associations that this pen, and pens in general, have for me. Whether or not I realize it, I inherited these associations from my community or I developed them in conversation with my community.

Among the many factors that underlie statements like "This is a good pen," one fact deserves special and primary attention: Human wonder carries elemental "shoulds" long before we express moral conclusions, even to ourselves. We can call these "normative elements."

Normative Elements

Shoulds are born in the heart.

We experience an "I should" long before we say it, and often before we even notice it. This is a moral experience. It is the beginning of all ethics. But there are many factors that appear as we notice the "I should," understand it as a moral imperative, express it in concepts and words, and make our decision.

The central normative force.

As we wonder about anything at all, we experience a need, an exigency, a psychic demand, a core urgency that we "ought" to take advantage of opportunities, to thrive, to be masters of our destiny. Underneath all the impulses we feel to improve life, and tying them together, is the experienced need for existential consistency. In all human wonder, there is a spontaneous patterning that draws us not only to be reasonable in our knowing, but moves us on to make our actions consistent with what we know. As self-making persons, we experience a persistent desire that our minds and hearts work together. And when our hearts are at odds with our minds, we experience a disturbance in consciousness.

Subordinate and supportive normative forces.

Besides this central normative force for existential consistency, there are subordinate and supportive normative forces.

Understanding that "this is a pen" involves insights, and insights grasp a core of meaning and discard irrelevant data. This separation that our intelligence carries out all the time is normative inasmuch as it narrows the field of inquiry. About whether this is a pen, it says, "I shouldn't bother about whose pen it is, or where I saw it, or what color it is, only whether I can write with it."

On another front, understanding why the Bic company has dominated the disposable pen market means hitting that balance between naively accepting what everybody says and suspiciously hesitating to accept anyone's word. Far from a blind impulse, this balancing act is a normative, discerning impulse peculiar to reason.

On a more external front, our spontaneous likes and dislikes are far more often the result of unquestioned symbolic associations than of clear-eyed scientific assessments. I may prefer fountain pens because I can picture the blue-enameled, gold-trimmed pen that my father used for signing my report card. The normativity of preference is built into the psyche prior to any and all assessments.

These elements are "normative" in a unique sense. They are unlike the typical social and legal norms that shape a community. They are not pre-existing ideals to live up to. They are not like scores to be achieved or quality standards to meet. These kinds of norms cannot be found anywhere in the universe except in human consciousness. We might define them as "norms guiding wonder." They drive our reflections forward in part by excluding alternatives we perceive as ugly, stupid, unrealistic, or irresponsible. There is a power in us that demands—but doesn't necessarily cause—that we know what's going on and that our behavior be consistent with what we know.

So before moral norms are expressed in concepts, they are first a felt demand in consciousness. When we are deliberating—as opposed to noticing, understanding, or realizing—our consciousness is what we commonly call "conscience." But conscience sinks its roots down into the levels of our noticing, understanding and realizing. It guides their proper functioning, and, while the proper functioning of each level has its own meaning, only the entire proper functioning of all levels in us as whole persons makes us fully self-transcendent.

The criterion for a value judgment

The final normative criterion for making a value judgment is the same as for making a factual judgment, namely, the absence of relevant questions. This is not a recipe for being right; it is how we actually make judgments. Whenever we consider a proposal that Y is good, the consideration takes the form:

Y is good if conditions C1, C2, C3 . . . are fulfilled.

If we ascertain that C1, C2, C3 . . . are fulfilled, we conclude that Y is good.

Now it takes a person of experience to say that C1, C2, C3. . . are the relevant conditions. Those who don't know all the relevant conditions will rush to judgment, while those who include conditions that are not truly relevant will forever hesitate. Those who have mastery of a situation or a historical period, will not only know most of the questions relevant to these conditions, but also know where their knowledge falls short and so will couch their judgments with "probably" or "based on best available evidence, ..."

The role of feelings

Still, the questions relevant to value judgments feel very different from the questions relevant to factual judgments. That difference is feelings. Feelings are our initial responses to possible values, but they are not at all to be confused with value judgments themselves. Whether we inherited certain feelings as part of our family attitude, or we personally developed our feelings to respond in our fashion, they are our instinctual movements toward some things and away from others, prior to any focused deliberation.

I define feelings as *notions of value*. I'm using "notions" here in Lonergan's technical sense. It is not identical to an idea, as in "Architects have new notions about high-rises." Nor is it identical with a proposal, as in "I have a notion to buy a new car." Rather, for Lonergan, a notion is the anticipation that arises before insight, before assertions, before proposals. Thus we have notions of intelligibility, of reality and of worth—the experienced need for them as well as some expectation that we may gain them.

Defining feelings as notions of value keeps in focus the relation of feelings to value judgments. They are the original "questions" about value. They function as the wonderment that precedes verbalization, much in the manner that notions of intelligibility and truth precede insights and factual judgments, respectively.

We experience questions as a change in consciousness before we conceptualize them, let alone before we put them into words. They arise as phantasms or images that disturb consciousness because their pattern lacks an order. It may be an order that was assumed, and missing; or insufficient, and inviting exploration. Insight pivots on this image and grasps some heuristic element, something about what seems to be lacking. There are three main heuristics that we experience. We can grasp:

that there's an intelligibility missing, for which an explanation is needed;

that there's verification missing, for which we need a Yes or No when we wonder if a proposed assertion is true;

that there's something good missing, for which we need to make an evaluation.

Insight then fiddles with various conceptualizations of the question. Conceptualization adds further heuristics, such as "I expect the answer to be a number, or a narrative, or a syllogism, or a historical account, or a metaphor, or a simple Yes, or some kind of approval.

We know from experience that asking the right question is half the battle. Sometimes we are hit by the inverse insight that we've been asking the wrong question. To put this more accurately, we grasp that our conceptualization of the question assumed intelligibilities that turn out to be unavailable. The question may have unnecessarily narrowed our search for an answer or may have simply pointed in the wrong direction.

Our feelings have objects. The object they intend appears as an image in consciousness. So in a single, compact apprehension, the things we notice are already affectively charged with their potential to help or harm us—a capability we share with animals that enables us to respond spontaneously to danger and opportunity. These immediate symbolic anticipations prompt us humans to conceptualize and verbalize questions like "Is this really better?" or "Better look out here!"

As infants, our instincts for better and worse were carried by these compact apprehensions. As we moved through childhood, we learned to pause for value judgments, putting both a distance from and a higher control over our spontaneous feeling-loaded images about better and worse.

Conscience

So the normative function of conscience works through a compound disturbance. We experience inconsistencies between what we know about a situation, our spontaneous feelings about it, our customary values, the expectations of others, guidance from the wise, commitments we made, the duties involved in our social roles, and what we think will result from our actions. Various moral philosophers restrict the normativity of moral consciousness to only one of these elements—to virtue, or ideals, or obedience, or promises, or obligations, or consequences. But all these valid aspects of moral deliberation draw their validity from this compound moral disturbance.

These demands are not just elements *within* consciousness; they *are* consciousness. Anyone who is not unconscious is at least selectively noticing, often wishing and craving, and as often dreading and resenting. At times, being conscious is being intelligently conscious—feeling dissatisfaction over what doesn't make sense and toying with possible explanations. At times it's being reasonably conscious—setting aside wishful thinking and simplistic explanations to make room for reality. At times it's being morally conscious—alert to what shouldn't be and pushing for what should. All the while, it's also being affectively conscious—a psyche full of feelings pulling this way and that, a heart discerning among these pulls, and, when love has taken over, a self-presence that includes the "we" that we have become with others.

Foundation of Ethics

It's not a list. It's an urge.

These normative elements do not produce value judgments like a sausage machine. They do not work like if-then decision trees. They are not a list of rights and wrongs. They are not even a list of rules for making a decision. In fact, they are unlike most other "productive" processes we can think of.

First, they require a personal, direct inquiry, not a blind acceptance on someone else's authority. Where we do accept someone else's authority, we cannot claim that our acceptance is responsible unless we have made the prior value judgment, on no one's authority but our own, that we can trust this person's word.

Second, the normative elements operate through quasi "precepts" that guide our attentiveness, intelligence, and reason

as we seek to understand both the situation that our choice will affect and the probable outcomes of the choices we make.

Third, in continuity with our personal, direct inquiry, we experience an inner demand that we stand by our decision. We say that "we take responsibility," but we take it, not as an additional weight on our shoulders, but as a change in the persons that we happen to be. We *become* responsible.

It is these internal, normative elements that provide the base of all ethics. This claim can be deeply upsetting, particularly for those who rely on outside criteria alone to make practical and personal decisions. By focusing first on what occurs in men and women, Lonergan relegates to second place every ethical pronouncement by every moral authority, no matter how revered. He supports a "hermeneutic of suspicion," by which we expect that value statements express human minds, and human minds can be biased. He supports not only a "minor authenticity" that adheres to reigning moral standards, but also a "major authenticity" that will challenge those standards where they seem tainted. What is left is the individual, in consort with companions at a similar level of affective, moral and intellectual development, as the ultimate bar of judgment. Indeed, if the criterion for making a judgment is the absence of relevant questions, the more people of experience I consult, the more likely I'll know what the relevant questions are.

To see how these normative elements provide the base for all ethics, think of the various maxims we hold as fundamental -- "All people are created equal." "Honor thy father and mother." "Act as though your actions were the model for everyone's actions." We can forget that these ideals were formulated at a point in history. Somebody brought to mind a cluster of similar experiences and made a connection about what was the essential moral point to be made. But before they made the point, they experienced the norms of their consciousness moving them to decide for themselves, pressing them toward understanding experience, toward verifying that understanding, toward distinguishing between mere personal preference and what makes sense for the larger whole, and toward that existential consistency among all these operations that constitutes a well-authored maxim. They sought the wisdom of their fellows and exposed their ideals to scrutiny by a public often reluctant to listen. There is no ideal known to humanity that was not someone's idea. Our public moral standards all have dates and authors. Those that endure have stood the test of relevant questions posed by people from diverse cultures and times. Still, not knowing what the times to come may be like, we cannot know for sure which formulations of our moral standards may be the next to fall.

The Range of Ethics

Ethics is not one of the big issues. It's the only issue.

Besides being the source of ethics, these normative demands in us define the range what may be called "ethical" far beyond what many people expect. As norms that constitute human consciousness, they affect every human decision. While we need the ideals, the standards, the laws, and the rules that codify the moral wisdom of our ancestors, we should not be lulled into thinking that ethics is restricted to what is codified. It is not even restricted to what is codifiable. Every single one of the billions of decisions we make in a lifetime is affected by these inner norms far more than by external guidelines. These inner norms are the source of all our creative enterprises, where our considerations of "right" and "wrong" are negligible compared to our preoccupation with "better" and "worse."

We could say, then, that the ethical is as wide as the human. In 1959 Lonergan distinguished between an Ethics of Law and an Ethics of Achievement.² Obviously, he thought of the moral order as including not just every potential for evil but every potential for good as well. But he never refers to this distinction again. In its place, and much more comprehensively, Lonergan discusses, not "ethics," but "the human good" and the dynamics of "social progress."

The Expression of Value Judgments

Values are not obvious.

While we make value judgments all the time, it is no easy task to know what our values may be. All we have to go on are the different ways we express our value judgments, and no expression is without ambiguity.

There are three ways that we commonly express our values:

Value Statements—the statements of moral standards or policies.

Stories—the narratives meant to convey exemplary moral conduct.

Actions—the deeds we do.

² *Topics in Education* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 103, 106.

Value Statements

Our psyches are wonderfully economical in the way they seek a few value judgments that can apply in numerous situations. We express these judgments as moral standards or policies. These statements express clear concepts that are applicable in a wide variety of situations.

Unfortunately, these statements are not easy to apply. Because they are general, not specific, they need to be adapted to concrete circumstances. In law, we distinguish legislation (the rules) and adjudication (the adjustments to concrete circumstances). With our children, we hope that they will recognize emergency situations in which the rules shouldn't apply. Also, we don't hold our general value judgments rigorously. Many advocates of "The Sanctity of Life" will oppose all abortion, but will support terminating the life of certain criminals. Even our proverbs conflict: Haste makes waste, but He who hesitates is lost.

One reason adjudication is so difficult is that new situations arise that the people who first formulated the value statement never envisioned. We inherited many of our values from sages who never knew about the situations that result from the scientific, scholarly and philosophical advances over the last 200 years that make our world a different place.

Take dying, for instance. In the last 60 years legal and medical standards have moved from strict requirements to maintain life at all costs, to guidelines for withdrawing artificial life support, to withdrawing ordinary nutrition and hydration, and currently to guidelines for letting willing patients just starve themselves to death rather than face another round of chemotherapy.

Similar examples can be found regarding genetic manipulation, corporate liabilities for the ecology, purposeful misinformation by the press, and so on. Books abound on medical, business, and legal ethics today because unforeseen situations are emerging from many corners.

But there is a deeper and more intractable reason why general value statements are notoriously difficult to apply. It lies in an overly sanguine dependence on concepts. Moral concepts such as "life" or "death" or "risk" or "costs" are abstractions. We form these concepts by abstracting core similarities from a variety of experiences. In effect, we strip away the data to reveal a bare idea. Then we hope that we can use logic to move back from the abstract, bare idea to concrete moral situations.

Loneragan refers to this approach as "conceptualism."³ It relies almost exclusively on logic. It overlooks several roles of insight.

Insights are what produce concepts in the first place.

Insights are acts of understanding that can lie outside logical procedures.

Insights maintain the link to actual data.

An insight will exclude irrelevant data, but it does not "abstract" a concept from the data. Rather, an insight grasps an intelligibility inherent in the data. It may express this intelligibility in concepts but it anticipates that those who hear or read will experience an insight into data themselves, and not be content with understanding merely the internal logic of a set of concepts.

Stories

We also express our values in stories. We brag about what we have done. We pass on stories from others after adding our own moral spin. Our stories may include accounts of why things happened the way they did, but these otherwise cool explanations are wrapped in hot descriptions of how people behaved. To impress and guide the moral sensibilities of others, we rely on images and feelings far more than on concepts.

The reason stories are so compelling is that they tap into our symbolic representations of our world, where our instinctual feelings attach to dramatic images. We each carry symbolic representations of a police officer, a teenager, a parent, a child, and even of social institutions such as law and education. So when we encounter any of these in everyday life, we will likely feel about them in a predetermined way.

As expressions of our value judgments, stories are highly analogical. They appeal to our need for images and feelings, not our need for explanations, rules and procedures. Stories can range from the purely mythical narratives of the Epic of Gilgamesh, to history-based legends of St. Nicholas, to puffed-up hagiographies, to critical histories of World War II. They can bring an enduring meaning of the Christian Gospels to today, despite disagreements among exegetes about the meaning intended by their authors.

In any case, whenever we express our moral stance in stories, those who listen may well suspect we're glossing here and inflating there. Even when they understand clearly the values we praise, they may

³ See "The Subject," *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), pp. 69-86. Most of the material on conceptualism is on pp. 74-75.

disagree entirely. The deeper—and darker -- ambiguity lies in the how we often tell ourselves stories that represent the values we wish we had, not the values inherent in our actual behavior.

Actions

We sometimes express very specific value judgments in words. For example, "It might be better to use a rake on these clumps of dirt instead of a shovel." More often than not, however, we just make the judgment. We don't even say these words to ourselves. There are a number of ways we might say the words that represent our judgment, but while the words can vary, the judgment does not. In these cases we skip directly to a decision to act on the judgment. We just pick up the rake. Our action is the expression of the specific and concrete judgment we made.

Actions do not spell out the value judgments of the actors. Motives are notoriously elusive, not only from onlookers, but even from the people so motivated. To understand someone's actions, an insight is needed.

Again, keep in mind the relationship between insights and concepts. An insight into someone's actions will be a grasp of some intelligibility inherent in his or her observed behavior. A concept results from an insight, but typically detaches itself from the actions that were understood. Take, for example, two psychologists.

Marjorie takes her client's claims not as truth but as evidence. She plays with the evidence until it falls into place in a plausible explanation and delicately leads her client to the same insight. Should contrary evidence appear, they both reconsider the evidence, looking for a more fundamental explanation. Marjorie brings a host of concepts to bear—repression, suppression, reaction formation, and so on—but she uses these to help her to insight, and if she mentions them to her clients her purpose is simply to assure them that their problem is not unique.

Alex takes his client's claims as generally true. He expects that all claims should fit into one of the basic conceptual schemes that he learned in school. Whether or not he admits it to himself, he is committed to the idea that human behavior is always some instance of an abstract universal. "This is a case of obsession." Or, "You have a paranoid personality." He works hard as mastering his craft, but he envisions that mastery as knowledge of all the categories applicable to the psyche. His clients come away impressed with his knowledge, with a name for their malady, but with no insight into their behavior.

The point here is that if actions speak louder than words, what they speak is just evidence. All actions, even our most personal and hidden decisions, are subject to interpretation.

All expressions of values, then, are subject to a critique. Value statements may be clear, but not verifiable in deeds. Stories may be compelling, but most people can read almost anything into the symbols and metaphors they rely on. Actions may give solid evidence against which to test value statements and stories, but being no more than evidence, they are subject to interpretation.

The Provisional Character of Value Judgments

Moral certitude is rare.

In any moral situation, understanding the situation is first. Passing moral judgment on what we misunderstand is a verdict with no defendant. But we cannot wait for cognitive certitude before making a moral decision. So, we always run the danger of making moral decisions based on misunderstandings.

This is not to say we cannot have any certitude. It's easy to have no doubts about events that have occurred. For example:

The baby died.

The man lost his savings.

The hospital closed.

But to understand a moral situation is not just to list what happened but to understand how it came about and why people behaved the way they did. Because why and how require explanations, and not just restatements of fact, we propose "plausible" explanations, "best available" opinions, "reasonable" judgments.

"The baby died from parental neglect."

"The man lost his savings because his Savings & Loan collapsed."

"The hospital closed because people didn't pay their bills."

These explanations are not considered "correct." If we had to express the precise degree of our commitment, we'd say, "Probably correct, barring new information, newly noticed information, or new perspectives on the information at hand." So, while we can often be certain about what happened, we are more provisional about how and why it happened.

A value judgment goes further, and has its own kind of provisional character. After we've offered an explanation, we ask what we ought to do. This is asks for a value judgment. But value judgments have a provisional character all their own. Take this value judgment, for example, the judge may declare:

"If the baby died because of sheer neglect, with no mitigating circumstances, then the parents should be thrown in jail for 50 years."

When judges in any case recommend a punishment, they each bring to bear a unique blend of moral ideals, symbolic associations, and personal experience. Each stands at a different point in moral development. Some may be stuck in a child's reward-punishment framework; some may have moved toward an enlightened self-interest position; still others may put the benefit of all over personal gain. But the decision itself tests these standpoints for validity. A judge's implicit morality becomes exposed. Perhaps a light will dawn. Perhaps some will become aware, as if for the first time, that they've guided their lives by a faulty moral assumption. Some may retreat to the security of what they've always believed, but others will step up to a level of responsibility more appropriate to the situation at hand.

In any situation, it is difficult enough for collaborators to feel sure they understand a situation. Knowing what to do about it brings in all the complicated variations in moral development among the collaborators themselves. Without new information, they seldom change their minds about what happened. Yet even when no new information is forthcoming, they often change their minds about what to do because the issue itself tips their scale of values. In the meantime, tomorrow emerges from today, shaped more or less profoundly by whatever, if anything, they decide, and posing its own unforeseen moral questions.

With both jury and judge, we do not expect what we call "certitude." The state of mind they hope to attain is better called "conviction." I make this distinction to help undercut the expectation that ethics gives certitude. Troubled people everywhere wish for such certitude; it would certainly make moral risk unnecessary. But living is moral risk-taking. There's no getting around it.

The Communal Character of Value Judgments

We're in this together

We experience the provisional character of value judgments also in the millions of value judgments that we make with others. We discuss issues with our spouses, our children, our friends, our colleagues, and

with the millions of people who make up "public opinion." If we're intellectually humble, we enter communal deliberations like these with a prior value judgment that it's better to listen to people of character than to people with an ax to grind.

So we often go along with proposals at odds with our own, not because we're totally convinced of the other's position, but because we came to the deliberation ready to go along with wiser voices. In business and academia, we call the outcome of a group's deliberations a "consensus" rather than an "agreement." "Agreement" can suggest that everyone takes the same view of the situation and has identical positions about what to do. The more nuanced "consensus" indicates that we are willing to cooperate and support the proposal, even though we are not completely convinced that the proposal will work or even is worth doing. Our agreement remains provisional until we see the proof in the pudding, and if the pudding turns out badly, the group calls another meeting.

On the other hand, we're not isolated skeptics. We live in love. As love grows in a friendship, family, clan or nation, a single decision to trust others eliminates millions of autonomous deliberations over the small, practical decisions we face every day.

The Truth of Value Judgments

Yes, we can know it.

The fact that value judgments are usually provisional and communal does not mean that we can never really know what is good. We hope that we really improve things by our value judgments. But while it's true that we *intend* to know what is actually good, do we ever achieve this kind of moral knowledge? In other words, if values are more than mere convention, if there really is a difference between truly valuable and apparently valuable options, if we anticipate a priority of values that is not reducible to the priority of our preferences, then we can ask whether being objective actually reaches the truly valuable. And, acknowledging that most value judgments, like most verified explanations, are provisional, is this provisional character effectively open to real improvements in our welfare or is it reducible to a cultural relativism?

We can follow Lonergan's lead by first noticing our performance. At the core of our values lies our judgment that being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible are worthwhile. Conversely, we believe that being obtuse, stupid, silly, and irresponsible are not worthwhile. Such value judgments apply not only to our personal being attentive,

etc., but also to anyone's. Judgments that openness, questioning, curiosity, benevolence, and beneficence are truly worthwhile enjoy a fundamental status. They're unrevisable. Just as we cannot intelligently belittle intelligence nor reasonably disparage reason, so we cannot responsibly demean responsibility.

Moving out from this core, we assess the values of all aspects of moral pursuit.

We can consider the value of the collaboration by which one party seeks the opinions of another, whether of our contemporaries or our forebears.

We can ask whether it's worth while for anyone to notice and explore the duality in our knowing, the various ways our experience is patterned, the several realms of meaning that form subsets of our knowledge—commonsense, theory, aesthetics, scholarship, philosophy, mysticism.

We can ask about the worth of noticing the difference between particular goods and a good of order, or about the phenomena of affective, moral and intellectual conversions.

We may have noticed that reason tends to prioritize the objects of our feelings along a scale of values moving upward from vital to social to cultural to personal to transcendent. Consequently, we will ask about the value of taking control of our feelings accordingly.

While we might change our language and conceptual frameworks for all these differentiations, it would be extremely difficult to deny the value of noticing them and exploring their potentialities.

Moving still further out from this core and its differentiations, there are the generic value judgments we call "policies" and the analogous expressions of values we call "stories." Our policies and our stories affect planning, and planning in turn affects implementation and practice. The closer we get to practice, the greater the possibility of revision. But we still anticipate that revisions may prove to be truly good.

In short, we already have an immense and unrevisable knowledge of what is truly valuable. We recognize the objective worth of being personally authentic, and we recognize the objective worth of good people. We recognize the objective worth of such authenticity as it prioritizes the objects of our particular value judgments. And so we recognize the objective worth of transcendent values over personal hopes and fears, of personal hopes and fears over cultural norms, of

cultural norms over social orders, of social orders over vital needs and desires.

The Comparative Character of Value Judgments

It's not about knowing good and bad. It's about doing—and doing better.

To act morally is to act in accordance with what is intelligible. But the intelligibility of the universe is not fixed. It is a complex of systems on the move. From the very beginnings, whether located at the Big Bang or before, new and higher systems have emerged from older, more primitive systems. Lonergan spelled out an intelligible structure to this grand, burgeoning mess—"emergent probability." There is a dynamic, an intelligible process, in the universe by which more intelligible schemes govern the functioning of lower schemes. With the appearance of each new form—the molecular from the atomic, the reproductive from the molecular, the sensitive from the reproductive, the conscious from the sensitive, and the intelligent from the conscious—the workings of lower forms in accord with their respective laws become the potential for the emergence of higher forms.

Even the stabilizing routines that mark the long uneventful periods of history are full of "improvements" in this view inasmuch as they ward off factors that undermine stability. An undermining of stability is a loss of an intelligible scheme that had dominated a series of lower schemes. So, for example, atomic particles and their associated fields of time and space appeared before molecules. But the stability of molecules is not absolute. They exist in a field of disintegrating forces that can be defeated only by an "improvement" that created the stabilizing adaptations that better ensure survival.

The emergence of higher functioning, along with the maintenance of existing functioning, is intelligible. But it's not the intelligibility of a wound-up clock. Rather it's the more elegant intelligibility of higher schemes emerging in accord with the dynamics of probability. Briefly, it's the emergence of higher circular functioning from lower circular functionings, not automatically, but under the intelligibility proper to probability.

We may get insight into emergent probability in a study of physics and chemistry. But we also experience emergent probability directly. This occurs in our spontaneous awareness that just as there's always more to know, so there will always be a corresponding expansion in the range of the potentialities revealed in what we learned. Raw curiosity and creative opportunism are direct experiences of emergent

probability operative in our consciousness surmounting difficulties by seeking "better" paths.

Moralists often speak of good and evil, right and wrong, fair and unfair, just and unjust. But this view is a static abstraction from our everyday intuition that the real issue is between better and worse.

"I'd better show up."

"They had better pay the money."

"You'd better take the side street."

We take our stands on the value of options not only against a background of known alternatives but also within foggy anticipations of something totally new. Because the entire orientation of our consciousness is to explore potentials, and not merely coexist dumbly with what happens to be, all of morality is about improvement. Even the depressed and suicidal explore ways to minimize their suffering. True, maxims like "Murder is wrong" suggest fixed absolutes, but many ethicists who reflect on war, capital punishment and abortion reject maxims like these. And when they do, it's not because there's some other, more fundamental, maxim for selecting maxims but because their consciousness deems it "better" or "worse."

Value Judgments Can Be Ill-Conceived

We can evaluate only what we know.

Why is the world continually messed up? Lonergan cited the opinion of Sir Karl Popper that the reason is not because people are wicked; it's because people are a little stupid.⁴ Although Lonergan didn't cotton to Popper's dismissal of the role of wicked people, he agrees that our understanding is highly fallible. And any value judgments based on a misunderstanding will be ill conceived.

Obviously, we'll misunderstand if we don't have all the data. But this only means that someone will eventually notice unaccounted-for data, which usually happens after our implementation of some plan falls flat.

Sometimes, however, reliable data are available but we keep involving ourselves in situations we don't understand. Usually we tell ourselves that we need more information. But to set a solid base for full self-appropriation, it is extremely important to consider a more embarrassing reason, so embarrassing in fact that otherwise intelligent

⁴ "Healing and Creating in History," *A Third Collection* (New York: Paulist, 1985) p. 101.

men and women find it preposterous: *We may not really want to understand.*

Lonergan's spelled out four ways that this "flight from understanding" could occur:⁵

Neurosis. We unknowingly repress the very images that could precipitate some insight into our troubling behavior. We devalue insight into images and affects of our psyches.

Egoism. We knowingly suppress images that might trigger an insight that benefits others more than ourselves. We devalue the good of the community.

Group Egoism. We join forces with those who will together suppress images that might trigger an insight that benefits some other group more than our own. We devalue inter-group cooperation.

Presumptive Common Sense. We prefer insights into immediate practicalities rather than the longer process of assembling higher and higher viewpoints on ever widening ranges of situations in the context of a moving history. We devalue science, scholarship, philosophy and theology.

These all have implications on real situations. Our ideas about our psychological fixations, our self-centeredness, our community's well being, and the intricacies of science, politics, economics, culture, and particularly philosophy all contain oversights. So when we take concrete steps, we tend to make matters worse than they already are.

Typically, we will avoid all blame. We may in all honesty consider that we are steadfastly willing to do the right thing. We rightfully object when anyone accuses us of bad will, but we fail to see the source of the problem. It's not our will but our intelligence that needs repair. Our honesty is infected with a huge blind spot because we will not ask certain kinds of questions, including, and most crucially, the question about whether we may have such a blind spot.

Worse yet, these biases have all the self-propagating features of viruses: Once they settle into a suitable host site, they infect our other intellectual organs. We get used to them. We consider them at first benign, then a source of strength, and eventually a source of pride. Then the virus spreads to others. We brag about being a little compulsive, or "taking care of Number One," or loyal to the death, or

⁵ His analysis of these four way we bias our understanding appears all across his *oeuvre*. Still, the best account is in *Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) pp. 212-267 (In the 1957 version, pp. 191-244).

being someone of "total common sense." Parents teach these biases to their children, as do teachers to their students.

Value Judgments Can Be Miscarried

Doing What We Please

About the question why the world is continually messed up, Lonergan also cited the opinion of Lord Bertrand Russell. People are clever, not stupid; the problem is that they're wicked. Again, while Lonergan is less sanguine about how effectively people tap their potentials for being clever, he agrees that people are can indeed be wicked

This feature of value judgments can be illustrated by a thought experiment. Suppose you are convinced that X is what you ought to do. Suppose, further, that you feel ready, willing and able to do it. Would you ever deliberately *not* do it? Keep in mind that I'm talking about a situation where you're totally convinced about what you should do, where you have the means at hand, and where you're willing to go ahead with it. Is it really possible that you would deliberately and knowingly act against our own moral and intellectual commitments?

St. Paul thought so:

Although the will to do what is good is in me, the performance is not. I do not do the good that I want, and I do the evil that I don't want.⁶

I think you will find many examples in your own experience. Some cases fall under an ethics of law, where you know what you should *not* do, but you do it anyway. But most cases, I believe, fall under an ethics of achievement, where you know very well what you ought to do but you don't do it.

Conscience, after all, is a kindly voice in competition with wicked voices—those that entice us to act against what we are convinced we ought to do. This competition is not merely about this or that decision. It's ultimately about gaining total dominance of what 'good' effectively means to us. Either it means what is personally satisfying or it means what is objectively worthwhile. Eventually, our moral horizon gels. We become a person for whom 'good' means either 'good for me' or 'good in itself.' If we embrace 'good for me' then our value judgments themselves have their base not in what is objectively intelligent and reasonable, but in options restricted to personal payoff, along with the

⁶ Romans 7:19. Lonergan quotes Ovid along the same lines: "I see what is better. And I approve of it. But I don't follow it." See *Insight*, p. 623.

violence to our intelligence and reason that our psychic imperatives for consistency require.

The Subjective Dimension of Value Judgments

A Moral Conversion

Not only is it possible to act against our better judgment, it is also possible that we have not settled for ourselves what "better" really means. So we have the familiar phenomenon of false guilt -- people feeling they did "wrong," when their meaning of "wrong" is based on compact, symbolic views of "the real world," without insights into what makes something wrong. The reason this is so familiar is that we all start out life with primitive moral views and only gradually, through several plateaus, discover successively more comprehensive meanings of morality.

As infants, we are consumed with our needs and wants. No one else's counts. Before long, however, the demands of playmates give us insight into the value of playing roles. We begin to see how cooperation pays off for everyone. This naturally develops into a respect for school authorities and the laws made by governments. But, as our intellectual horizons expand to include the common good, we come face to face with an existential decision. The common good often puts us at a disadvantage as individuals. Our intelligence suggests that we sacrifice a high personal payoff by contributing to a modest payoff for everyone concerned, but our self-centered habits can rebel. The existential decision is a decision about how to be a person. Shall we pursue what we want for ourselves or shall we pursue what makes the most sense even if someone else were in our shoes?

This is not a decision about a single action. We first notice a pattern in our decisions, their effects on other people, on the policies affected by our decisions, and, most intimately, on ourselves. These observations sneak up on us. As we grow up, it gradually dawns on us that the effects of all our value judgments lie not only outside of us. We are an effect as well. We discover that we have been considering the most intimate value question of all: What have I been making of myself? And what will I make of myself?

To the degree that we have been self-serving, our consciousness has been heading in two directions. Our minds revel in keen insight, but our hearts rein in our minds where the intelligent thing to do serves a larger good at our personal expense. So we have a sense of self-presence that is disturbed. Our mental self-presence would be open to anything that makes more sense, but

our affective self-presence keeps the lid on. The problem is that it's difficult to stand back and realize that our self-presence is disturbed. A disturbed consciousness does not easily recognize that it's disturbed.

On the other hand, to the degree that we have tried to make decisions based on objective values, our consciousness becomes integrated. Our minds present intelligent strategies, and our hearts give our intelligence its due. We experience what is often called a conscience at peace. Again, like the disturbed consciousness, it's as difficult to stand back and realize that our self-presence is at peace. The objectively better path may involve breaking a law, or turning the other cheek, or allowing someone else to accept an uninvited burden. It takes a lot of moral maturation to see the difference between the anxiety and pain that result from a good decision and the inner harmony that comes from having made it.

Still, people make the commitment, one way or the other. Lonergan names the horizons in which people can live "morally converted" and "morally unconverted." People living in a morally converted horizon are committed to the truly valuable over the merely satisfying. Their ideal is to decide what is good even if someone else were in their shoes. Not that they consistently act this way, but when they fail, they feel the ache of remorse and a resolve to do better next time. People living in a morally unconverted horizon are committed to what seems better for them alone. They are not out to hurt others. In fact, they typically promote the idea that if everyone were to put themselves first, in an "enlightened self-interest," everyone would see that some compromises are necessary to maintain their well-being. But they have suppressed insights into objectively better options, and to that degree, situations limp forward or fall backward.

The Affective Context of Value Judgments

Being in Love without Limits

The harmony we feel upon falling in love gives us the taste of a harmonious consciousness. Love's taste draws those living in an unconverted moral horizon toward a converted moral horizon. They feel invited to forgo personal payoff for the sake of the relationship. The movement does not stop with friendship. I-Thou relationships blossom by their nature into We-TheWholeWorld attitudes. Spouses become parents, friends volunteer together, and celibates take on apostolates.

What is going on here? How might we understand this phenomenon?

Affective Conversion

We can say that being in love gives a higher viewpoint on values. It does so by inviting us to a consistency between what we know and what we do. People in love feel the demand for this consistency most acutely because a deep tension among the diverse ends of each level of consciousness falls away. They feel like a single spirit, not someone at war with themselves. Love is the honey that sweetens the bitter edge of their sacrifices.

This is a high achievement, but not at all uncommon. Nearly everyone has some experience of the invitation. Those who turn it down experience a certain rebellion of a deeper but more vulnerable voice within. Those who accept it accept far more than an idea, far more than a view of reality, even far more than some obligation. They accept themselves as new selves.

Lonergan has referred to this acceptance as an "affective conversion." It opens us to the horizon of love. It requires a commitment, if it is to be more than the spontaneous intersubjectivity of primitive community. Still, that commitment admits of degrees.

The base of affective conversion is interpersonal, but not necessarily transcendent.

Mia lives in love with her friends, spouse, and family. She has an antecedent love for any other human person. But she does not pay attention to any budding wonder about where her love comes from, nor where it may head beyond death.

A transcendent affective conversion may be implicit but not explicit

Jan feels an abiding gratitude, not only for the beauties of the earth and the creative accomplishments of his cultural ancestors, but particularly for the unsolicited love that he discovers in his heart. But he does not name the source of such beauty, creativity and love. While thankful, he doesn't know whom to thank. Nor does he belong to any community who thanks this source together.

An explicitly transcendent affective conversion is a "we" with God.

Kitty loves the source of her loving. And she knows that she does. She belongs to a religious community—a mosque, a church, a synagogue—and believes that the

values and exemplars they bring to her are also gifts from the source of her loving.

(I am avoiding another term Lonergan has used for this horizon -- "religious conversion." The term too easily connotes anyone who engages in religious practices and, as we all know, the Pharisees do as much. It is not religious practice that leads to a moral conversion but rather a transcendent love that leads to both religious practices and a moral conversion. Also, there are people like Jan in whom the effects of his being in love liberate his moral consciousness, even though he would not claim to be "religious.")

Basic Affective Conversion

When the base of affective conversion is established, we savor this inner consistency; and our sense of ourselves expands. We no longer think of ourselves as solitary. We are now partners, friends, or members of a community. We think of our individual actions less as secret and cunning labors for advancing ourselves and more as open collaborations for what is truly better. Our consciousness becomes also a common consciousness. Without losing our sense of "I," our consciousness has expanded to allow the larger notion of "we."

Whether or not we notice, being in love opens up not only our moral horizon to the truly good. It also opens up our intellectual horizon by halting our flight from understanding, in each of the four ways that our intelligence can be biased. Bolstered by mutual commitment in love, we feel the strength to look at our neuroses squarely. We relax our protective grip on our egos and trust the benevolence of others to value the persons we happen to be. We even challenge misguided attitudes of our families, employers, politicians, and religious leaders. We take on the difficult burden of thinking things through rather than reach for the quick and dirty solutions. This dynamic of love is a healing dynamic. By healing our lame, blind, and halting intelligence, it frees our otherwise crippled creativity to work out what is truly better.

Transcendent Affective Conversion -- Implicit

This is only the beginning. As we grow in self-respect, we respect the love in our hearts. We feel grateful for this power, one we did not create but received. At the same time, we appreciate more deeply the wisdom of those whose outlooks and priorities we have inherited, some of whom we speak with every day.

The expansion of our horizon may stop here. There are many people who believe in God, who are dedicated to loving God and neighbor, but have never noticed that the love with which they love is an actually immediate gift from a passionate God. They think of their loving as a

given, without asking themselves, Given by whom? So they seek ways to love God better, giving short shrift to any welcome of the gift of love by which they already love. They imagine themselves as diligent in their efforts to reach God, oblivious of how God has reached them by the gift of loving. Their lives are marked far more by striving than by gratitude.

If our affective horizon lies here, at earth's boundaries, as it were, we are blind to the heavenly dimensions of our religious communities. Religious communities vary on how they understand the role of its leaders, its writers, its prophets, its healers, and all its members in mediating between the community and God. Some rely on magical practices to please, to appease, and to petition God. Some rely on words authored by God and written down by prophets and evangelists. Some name their human founder as God incarnate, a divine member of a historical community. But in most religious communities, only some regard their exemplars and directives and founders as God's approach to a reluctant people. The rest see them as their earnest but never successful efforts to approach a distant God.

Transcendent Affective Conversion -- Explicit

In any case, if being in love with one's neighbors tends to commit a person to what is truly valuable, as opposed to merely personal payoffs, so much more deeply, powerfully and unremittingly does being in love with God.

When we make love explicit, we give God a name. We don't just think *about* God, we talk *to* God. We notice different ways of praying. We work out religious disciplines to observe for ourselves and religious practices to share with others. We not only live in the universe as we know it; we live with affective ties to the loving giver of our universe and our loving destiny beyond death. It is not enough for us to do what comes naturally. It is not enough to be just the man or woman we are. Because of the love with which God has flooded our hearts, we are pulled ever beyond ourselves. Our self-presence is also a we-presence. Our concern for others envelops our concern for ourselves, and our concern for the "us" we can be with others envelops our concern for them as individuals.

The Good is a History

The good is neither abstract nor merely subjective nor merely objective.

We have noticed that our ideas of right and wrong are not the base of our morality. Our ideas lie halfway between the dynamic orientation of

consciousness toward what is better and the deeds we carry out that actually improves things.

This is evident in the different ways we use the word "good." We speak of good persons; we speak of good decisions; and we speak of good outcomes. From a properly theoretical perspective, one that seeks to understand the correlations between things, these three meanings of "good" go together.

Good persons don't sit on their hands. They habitually make good decisions, usually with good outcomes.

Good decisions are not made in a vacuum. They are made by good people, for good outcomes.

Good outcomes are not isolated from any person responsible for them. They result from good people making good decisions.

This theoretical meaning of "good" is not abstract. It is entirely concrete. It assesses any candidate for "goodness" against the criteria of the persons responsible, the quality of their decisions, and the value of the outcomes.

Lonergan spoke of history as an experiment, a global effort to try out what we think is better. So, as he said, "The good is a history."⁷ Conceptualist may regard "good" as some abstract quality that some situations have and others lack. Voluntarists may reduce the good to mere "good" intentions. Consequentialists may assess the good on outcomes alone. But if we are going to take a solidly theoretical approach to ethics, we need to correlate all its basic elements within a single view. One expression of this view might run as follows:

The intelligibility of the human good taken as a whole regards how every moral decision ever made shapes the unfolding of the world of meaning and values that we share and of which we are a part.

Our world is rife with contradictions, but these are what present the challenges to the human orientation to the better, as experienced by each succeeding generation. Because any and every human deliberation belongs to this universal, objective process, we do well to make them with this unfolding dynamic in mind.

Summary

Our analysis of what happens when we make value judgments has clarified a number of important features:

⁷ *Topics in Education*, 103.

- The ultimate base of all value judgments lies in normative forces in consciousness.
- The ultimate scope of ethics is as wide as the scope of all value judgments—ranging from the negative ethics of avoiding evil to the immensely larger field of a positive ethics of doing better.
- All value judgments are subject to critique.

General value judgments may be expressed in moral standards and policies as well as through narratives describing behaviors to emulate. But these cannot be translated directly into concrete value judgments.

Particular value judgments are expressed in the actions we take. The pattern of these actions is an expression of the persons we have become, whether responsibly or not. But our actions are subject to a wide variety of interpretations.
- All value judgments are conditioned.

Value judgments are conditioned cognitively because our understanding is often provisional.

Value judgments are conditioned morally because of several factors.

Our moral ideals are mostly inheritances from the morally imperfect culture we happen to be born into.

Our conscience matures through several stages.

We may or may not have achieved a moral orientation toward the truly good as opposed to the merely satisfying.

We listen to the wisdom of others, having first made a value judgment about which others we should listen to.
- Despite these conditions, we can know what is truly good.
- Concretely, value judgments are about what is better, not simply what is good. That is, the stands we take are not ahistorical absolutes but contributions toward improving the specific historical situation in which we happen to find ourselves.
- Our value judgments may need revision.

We can be misinformed about a situation.

We can act against our better judgment.
- Being in love liberates our morality.

It occurs basically in friendship and loyalty. It occurs in an unlimited manner in welcoming the gift of loving from God, as well as the gift of a community who is grateful for this loving.

- A properly theoretical understanding of ethics regards the good as the actual, historical unfolding of improved situations driven by men and women whose consciousness is liberated to choose the truly valuable.

Loneragan thrives on explanations that relate things to each other. In every question of method, he heads straight for the intrinsic intelligibility, delaying insight into usefulness. While he describes self-appropriation as a long and difficult climb, he gives very little description of the view from the mountaintop. It seems to me, however, that if we have moved beyond just understanding his position to the self-appropriation that comes with real assents, we need a symbolic integrator to consolidate these gains. So let me finish this section with a brief description of what I believe comes from realizing "What happens when I evaluate?"

We see all the way to the horizon. We envision all ethics as a communal historical experiment, rather than a collectivity of individuals trying to justify what they do. We are liberated from a personal preoccupation with being right the first time and newly committed to doing better the next time. We are alarmed at the depth of bias in ourselves and feel near despair at its intractability in others. But we drive back old habits of debate and put-downs and set up a healing love in their place. And we realize that the test of our being in love is not how successful we are in doing good but, more precisely, how liberated we have become in being responsible, reasonable, intelligent and attentive. Finally, we accept with gratitude the power of our loving, and we love the giver of love with all our heart.

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2. *Moral Epistemology*

What kind of objectivity is possible?

The Duality of Knowing

Objects out-there vs. Objects of intelligent understanding and reasonable affirmation

I recommend reading, again, Lonergan's "Introduction" in *Insight*, where he stresses the importance of achieving a personal mastery of the duality in our knowing—the duality between commonsense and scientific understanding. Without a real assent to this duality, and a close monitoring of our actual questions, it is extraordinarily easy to assume that "objective" means "really out there."

This assumption is more easily made and often less serious in the natural sciences, such as physics, chemistry, astronomy, and botany. Here, any errors about knowing mainly result in errors about the nonconscious entities in the universe. Eventually errors like this are reversed because explanations that violate the innate procedures of intelligence cannot stand up against persistent intelligent inquiry into the data on hand.

In the human sciences, as well as in literary and historical studies, the duality shows up not only in the investigator, but also in what he or she investigates.

Psychologists, historians, art critics, exegetes, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, philosophers and theologians are people who study people, and people know in two manners. When these investigators overlook the duality of knowing in themselves, they will overlook it in the people they study.

No matter how persistent they may be, if they don't understand understanding, they will persistently misunderstand all misunderstandings. For example, without a solid grasp of the difference between a vivid description of movements and a genuine explanation of data, they tend to focus on external descriptions of problems. They expect that misunderstandings must be a matter either of "a failure in communication," or "bad data." They never consider that some misunderstandings will never be resolved without some insight into how the human species flees from understanding.

To ask what objectivity means is a question about *how* acts of knowing have objects. It asks *how* our intentions to know reach actual knowns.

The answer to these questions will be some explanation of a relationship between knowers and knowns.

No doubt, people of profound common sense may ask the question, but they will typically look for a practical payoff for themselves, such as a recipe on how to be sure of themselves. Or they look for some rich description of how well wise people stayed objective in their outlooks.

Similarly, thinkers of an idealist bent will question whether objectivity is really possible, arguing that all we really know are our thoughts. We cannot stand outside our thoughts to determine whether they reach reality, since "determining" is itself just more thoughts. They resign themselves to the practicalities of doing the best we can, without ever having certitude about anything.

Lonergan, however, asks us to notice what we do when we know. We discover for ourselves that knowing is not just the naïve objectivity of experiencing what's out there. Nor is it the idealist's restricted objectivity of coherent thinking. Knowing also involves an objectivity that reaches what really exists by (1) passing a judgment on (2) what we think about (3) what we experience. We do well to notice these three aspects of objectivity, to understand not only what each means in itself but also how the three combine to fulfill our intention to know what is actually true.

So when we ask, "What kind of objectivity do we have when we evaluate?" we can expect that the answer will take into account the operations that go into evaluation. We can pose the question as follows:

What is the meaning of 'objectivity' in the context of the compound of three operations that constitute knowledge?

Here, Lonergan will use the technique of implicit definition. That technique has a conceptual part and a verification part. In the conceptual part, we define terms by their mutual relations. Lonergan calls these definitions "analytic propositions." The definition is just implicit in this part. We hold off making assertions that what we define actually exists. That occurs in the verification part. There is where we make the judgment that the elements defined in the conceptual part actually exist. Once we verify the elements and their mutual relations, we have reached an explanation of what actually exists. Lonergan calls these verified implicit definitions "analytic principles."

In *Insight*, Lonergan leads the reader to the verification part first. In Chapter 11, he invites us to make the following judgment:

I am a knower, in the exact sense of experiencing, understanding and judging.

Then, in Chapter 13, he addresses the conceptual part of objectivity. That is, he lays out relationships and dynamics among the basic elements. Then, quite briefly, he grounds the conceptual model in reality by appealing to the judgment that his readers presumably made that they are, indeed, knowers in the sense defined.

The payoff here is that anyone who actually verifies (and not merely understands) that he or she knows by this compound of experiencing, understanding and judging, can also have a precise grasp of what objectivity means.

Our question goes further than the objectivity of strictly cognitive judgments. We are concerned with the judgments of value by which we move from just knowing to actual doing. Since Lonergan addresses this topic only tangentially, to reach a meaning of moral objectivity consistent with the meaning of cognitive objectivity, it will help if we review the meaning of cognitive objectivity first. Following that review, we will extend the meaning of cognitive objectivity to the judgments of value, assessments, and deliberations proper to the moral sphere.

Cognitive Objectivity

A relationship between knowers and knowns

Because the mind is what it is, even common sense shows the three aspects of objectivity that correspond with the three components of knowing.

Absolute Aspect

We know the difference between a story that works and a story that is true. A story that works has its inner sense, but coherence alone is not the criterion for truth. When we ask, Really? it's because we have yet to connect the details of the story with details in someone's experience. This is the absolute notion of objectivity at work in us.

Normative Aspect

We try to strike a balance between jumping to conclusions and getting endlessly entangled in further considerations. In a highly emotional argument, we envision that the best way out is to get some intellectual distance on our emotions. We daydream and wish for the stars, but soon enough we return to the actual world at hand. This avoiding, envisioning, and returning are the normative notions of objectivity doing their work in us.

Experiential Aspect

Although we imagine data as being everywhere, we act only on data that we notice. We treat the "givens" of everyday experience as given to someone. (*Data* is Latin for "given.") They are intrinsically materials for thought, not just "out there." This is consistent with Lonergan's definition that the given is the actual set of materials about which the desire to know first inquires. There are no "data" that no one has ever noticed.

While these correspond to the three levels at which we can be consciously operating, each aspect is not restricted to each level. The absolute aspect is present whenever we seek to understand experience correctly. The normative aspect is present at all three levels inasmuch as each level has its own norms. The experiential aspect is present inasmuch as both our understanding and our judgment must exclude irrelevant data.

It's not difficult to notice these experiences, but to understand them within a theoretical perspective; we need to get insights into correlations among them. Experiential objectivity is not the sole feature of knowledge, nor even of thinking. But it provides thinking with the data to be understood by anyone with a sense of normative objectivity. Still, while normative objectivity combined with experiential objectivity is a feature of thinking, the combination is not the sole feature of knowledge. Normative objectivity brings a proposition or explanation to the bar of judgment for verification. The sole feature of knowledge is the combination of the absolute objectivity of judgment combined with normative and experiential objectivity.

The Principal Notion of Cognitive Objectivity

Besides these partial aspects of objectivity, we also carry an overall expectation that there's a "real world" to be understood. By this we mean not merely the world of physicists and chemists, but, far more often, a world where rules are important, where words have meanings, where customs command respect, where friendships blossom and grudges pull people apart.

In this world, reality is not simply the "out there." It is not even some "in here" of all the people who contribute to the meanings and values of our world. Reality includes the agreements, commitments, expectations, anticipations, and interpretations that link people to one another. These realities can be neither seen nor located. Yet they are real. They constitute the traditions we inherit, the meanings of our words, our sense of common purpose, and the alienation from those whose minds and hearts have no resonance with our own.

Lonergan refers to this expectation as a notion. That is, we anticipate that this bigger world of meanings and values really exists, and that most of these meanings and values are reliable. Further, we anticipate that any additions we make will be reliable as well. Lonergan also refers to this notion as the "principal" notion of objectivity. By this he means the anticipation where all our curiosity, wonder and inquiry begin.

Essentially the principal notion of objectivity boils down to three bare assertions:

The realm of whatever exists includes distinct things, A, B, C, ...

One of these things is me, a knower of things.

Other things are not me.

So, our principal notion of objectivity is not "everything out there." From our theoretical perspective that seeks correlations, objectivity is better understood as a differentiation within all being. To understand it, we need an insight into a correlation between objects and subjects. We can now offer a definition.

Cognitive objectivity is that ongoing, unfolding relationship between knowers and knowns that we count on in our lifelong quest to know what is real.

It remains that in the practical, dramatic, and aesthetic patterns of experience we *imagine* reality as out there, and the objectivity of "out there" works well enough. However, when we *investigate* it in an intellectual pattern, we aim to add insights to insights, building up what we understand, so that *our* world more closely approximates *the* world, the one largely constituted by the insights, judgments and commitments of others.

Verifying the Implicit Definition

If you understand everything presented thus far, then you have at least an understanding. But that may be all you have, in which case you need to verify whether your understanding is correct. In keeping with the technique of implicit definition, we do this by verifying that the elements of the definition exist.

Are you a knower in the sense defined by the compound of experience, understanding, and judgment?

Do you know anything besides the fact that you are a knower?

If you can answer yes to both questions, then you have verified the meaning of objectivity that Lonergan proposes.

Counterpositions

We can review the same three analogous meanings of objectivity from the point of view of the errors that are typically made.

To the degree that we realize that knowing is a compound of experience, understanding, and judgment (of fact or of value), we may also realize that *objectivity* carries three correspondingly analogous and interrelated meanings.

There is the *experiential objectivity* of the sheer givenness of data. It's what we see "out there" or experience "in here." In commonsense discourse, this is how we talk about what really is so, or worthwhile.

Unfortunately, this notion can stifle our curiosity about the further criteria we use to reach knowledge. Knowing reality is easily reduced to a mental look, vaguely called an *intuition*. The notion of objectivity collapses into a property of objects, detached from occurrences in subjects, so that certain things are deemed "objectively evil" or "objectively good," where "objectively" means "out there for anyone to see." This naiveté about objectivity restricts the morality of an act to whether our name for it falls under "good" or "bad," regardless of the act's historical setting and the interpretations of the act made by its participants.

Beyond knowing's experiential aspect, which bows to the data as given, there is a *normative objectivity*, which bows to the inner norms of inquiry. When we let these norms have their way, we raise relevant questions, assemble a coherent set of insights, avoid rash judgments, and test whether our ideas make sense of the data. Normative objectivity is not a property of objects; it is a property of us, the subjects. It is our being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. We speak of it when we say "You're not being objective" or "Objectively speaking, I say ..." Our internal norms of authenticity guard us against wishful thinking, against politicizing what should be an impartial inquiry, and against excluding questions that could upset our routines.

Still, while this view incorporates the subject in moral assessments, idealist philosophers tend to collapse other aspects of objectivity into this subjective normativity. What counts is brilliant analysis, strict logic, and internal coherence. They propose their structural analyses not as theories that may help us understand concrete experience but as unrevisable facts, where *fact* means almost the same thing as the empiricist's "really out there." The morality of an act is determined by its coherence with implacable theory, suppressing further questions about actual cases that any high school sophomore can ask.

Beyond the experiential and normative aspects of objectivity, there is an *absolute objectivity*, by which all inquiry bows to reality as it is. Inquiry aims to determine what is, and what is good. Inquiry ends with a judgment about what is, and what is good. The absolute character lies in our intention to affirm what is true or good independent of the fact that we happen to affirm it. It is not absolutely (totally) independent of the subject, nor absolutely (exclusively) out there, but rather absolutely *so*, without regard for who says so. This absolute objectivity lies neither in the object alone nor the subject alone but in a relation between the two, which GEM bases on the Aristotelian definition of truth as a relation between what I affirm and what really is. The absolute aspect is precisely what is absent when what I say happens to be false.

Those who assume the counterposition that reality has to be out there, independent of our minds, may notice their error if they ask themselves, How do my thoughts reach reality? They may notice that they *really* have thoughts. This insight may lead them to consider that the same criteria by which they know any reality—out there, or in here, or nowhere locatable at all—are identical to the criteria they use to know they have thoughts. Namely, they reach a virtually unconditioned. Their notion of absolute objectivity clinched the reality when they exhausted all relevant doubts that they have thoughts.

Taking these three analogs of objectivity together, and considering how they operate concretely, GEM states, in verifiable terms, what *principal notion of objectivity* operates in everyone. Commonsense discourse calls it a *mentality* or a *worldview*, meaning the objective world as we deal with it. But a theoretical explanation defines this knowledge precisely as the totality of correct judgments, supported by understanding, and rooted in experience. This all-encompassing principal notion of objectivity is a cumulative product of all successful efforts to know what is truly so and appreciate what is truly good. Not that we ever know everything or appreciate everything good. Besides the ignorance and moral confusion resulting from a lack of data, there is the more serious ignorance and moral confusion resulting from a spirit of inquiry skewed by neurosis, or egoism, or loyalism, or an aversion to in-depth analyses. But despite the eroding effects of these biases, this principal notion of objectivity is our recurring desire and our universal goal. As such, it is always the fruit of an authentic subjectivity intent upon being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible.

Moral Objectivity

A relationship between assessors and the assessed.

Besides cognitive objectivity, there's moral objectivity. Learners aiming to *be* right also feel the inkling to *do* right, otherwise, their *being* right is incomplete. Here we enter the realm of personal responsibility, where the question of objectivity returns in a whirlwind compared to the calm waters of cognitive objectivity. What counts now are the personal decisions that we take responsibility for. Taking responsibility can sometimes mean deciding against the advice of our friends, the laws of our country, or directives of our religious authorities.

In "Mission and the Spirit,"⁸ Lonergan was discussing the nature of morality, particularly how its core norms in consciousness head toward a kind of disinterestedness, an objectivity opposed to mere self-regard. Then he adds an analysis that begins with the statement, "The disinterestedness of morality is fully compatible with the passionateness of being."

Readers familiar with typical philosophical discussions about 'being' will be jarred by this seeming anthropomorphism. How can everything in existence be called passionate? Isn't "being" simply what's to be known in correct judgments, the objective of the pure desire to know?

But here, 23 years later, he has enlarged his scope on 'being' to include morality. By articulating the drive toward the good that we experience on a fourth level of consciousness, he completed the foundation for method in the sciences which formerly he had discussed in light of our drive toward the true. In this enlarged perspective, our "pure desire to know" is incorporated within a "pure desire for value."⁹

Similarity to Cognitive Objectivity

Moral objectivity is similar to cognitive objectivity. The key similarity lies in the criterion we use to make a judgment. That is, we use the same process when we judge that X is true as when we judge that Y is good.

⁸ "Mission and the Spirit," *A Third Collection* pp. 23-34 at 29-30.

⁹ "At an institute in Dublin in 1971 on method in theology, Lonergan was asked whether, just as he had spoken of a pure detached desire to know in *Insight*, he would now be willing to identify it with a pure detached desire for value. He answered yes." From William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell, "Introduction," *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), p viii.

For example, suppose I say to myself, "I should call Dorothy. "

This is not a judgment of fact. Nor is it the judgment involved in a logical conclusion. Nor is it a judgment that some explanation is correct. It's a judgment of value. I'm answering a question about worth.

However, the criterion for passing this judgment is the same as for these other kinds of judgments. The judgment issues from a grasp of a virtually unconditioned.

The conditions that enter into the judgment may vary widely. I may believe that Dorothy expects me to call soon, and that it's worthwhile to consider her expectations. If I have verified that the idea of calling her meets those conditions, then I have grasped that there are no unverified conditions. It follows with reasonable necessity that I make the judgment that I should call Dorothy.

Is my judgment objective? Maybe not, but consider the nearly irreconcilable differences people may offer as to why my judgment is not objective.

Naive realists, who *picture* objectivity as a property of extroverted knowing, may say no. "She never actually said you should call her. There's no obligation out there. You're just being subjective." They cannot *imagine* how there can be an obligation if it hasn't been written, or heard, or carved in stone. This is not a lack of imagination. On the contrary, this is because they believe that *imagining* is the same thing as knowing.

Idealists, who understand objectivity as a concrete universal from which we draw conclusions, may say no. "There is no categorical imperative that says you must meet everyone's expectations." Their search of universal systems that they *think* of as governing everything turned up no such obligation. They may be thinkers *par excellence*. Unfortunately, they believe that *thinking* about obligations is the same thing as knowing obligations.

Critical realists, who have verified that objectivity is a property of a relationship between subjects and objects, may also say no. "Moral objectivity exists if your assessment is based on a grasp that the relevant conditions for an obligation have been met. In this case, you didn't pay attention to the note on your lunch bag saying she'll be out shopping all day. That's a rather relevant condition that wasn't met."

Three Aspects of Moral Objectivity

Moral objectivity does not add a fourth partial aspect to the triplet of experiential, normative, and absolute objectivity. All three are present, and no further aspect appears. However, the moral horizon expands the range of each aspect.

On the experiential level, moral objectivity has also to consider the emotional states and the pulsation of feelings. Moral reflection that ignores feelings is unobjective in the experiential aspects of morality.

On the normative level, moral objectivity has also to consider the normative function of conscience. Moral reflection that ignores the voice of conscience is unobjective in the normative aspects of morality.

On the absolute level, moral objectivity has also to consider the absolute character not only of what we evaluate, but also of what we are becoming by our evaluation. Moral reflection that ignores the existential change in the person making the value judgment is not fully objective in the absolute aspect of morality.

The Principal Notion of Moral Objectivity

Following the model Lonergan presented for cognitive objectivity, we can move directly to a definition of moral objectivity.

The principal notion of moral objectivity entails three bare assertions:

The realm of the good includes distinct good things, A, B, C, ...

One of these things is me, an appreciator of good things.

Other good things are not me.

We see this notion at work in our overall expectation that there's a "real world of good things and opportunities" to appreciate. We do not merely know our world. We also appreciate what is good and depreciate what is not. Indeed, this moral perspective incorporates everything we considered within the cognitive perspective. This is evident in our belief that knowing is itself a good thing to do.

We mentioned that the pure desire to know is also a pure desire for the good. So, just as the universe of everything knowable constitutes the scope of cognitional knowing, so this same universe of everything worth being falls within the scope of evaluative knowing. Being is passionate. What exists, exists dynamically from within. While we can see traces of it in evolution, we can experience the expansive character of being directly in our consciousness as we wonder, inquire, and question. We experience it as we assess proposals, resist

degenerate forces and ferret out opportunities to make things better. We experience it as we take responsibility for the persons we are becoming, a person whom we cannot revise when death comes.

Briefly, then, we can give a theoretical definition of the principal notion of moral objectivity.

Moral objectivity is that ongoing, unfolding relationship between evaluators and the evaluated that we count on in our lifelong quest to know what is really better.

Verifying the Implicit Definition

Earlier, we considered how we can verify the definition of cognitive objectivity. Then we considered a definition of moral objectivity. We can now verify that definition by verifying that any additional elements in the definition actually exist. Here, the additional elements are value judgments and the objects judged to be of value.

Do you make value judgments?

Do you value anything besides being an evaluator?

If you answer yes to these two questions, you have verified the meaning of moral objectivity presented above.

This meaning of objectivity is crucially important for dealing with ethics scientifically. It gives us inner criteria for grounding our ethical opinions. By the same token, it buttresses our claim that our opinion regards what is objectively better.

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3. *Moral Metaphysics.*

What is the structure of the good?

The Metaphysics of a Generalized Empirical Method

A Heuristic Structure

In Lonergan's analysis of our insights, he notes that when we ask about anything at all, we already know something about it. In everything we wonder about, we have already narrowed the field of what we have yet to discover. It may be a number, a person's name, a chemical interaction, a word, a date, or an explanation of someone's behavior. He calls this knowledge of the skeleton of what is yet to be discovered a "heuristic structure." (*Heurisko* is Greek for "discover.")

In popular usage, "metaphysics" suggests a cloud of speculations about invisible cosmic forces on our lives. For many philosophers, metaphysics is the science that establishes the basic concepts about all reality, but often even these conceptual schemes are reduced to invisible but imaginable forces that shape everything that is. Lonergan is no enemy of concepts, but he consistently sets them in a context that includes their sources. In *Insight*, he clarified how all concepts issue from insights, and all insights issue from questions, and all questions occur with some clues as to their answers.

What is more, these clues that guide all human wonder are prestructured. The so-called "raw" data are less raw than we think: We don't even notice data that are not already related to the kind of insight we expect. The insight we expect, in turn, is related to the kind of verification we expect. We might expect a logical conclusion, or a judgment of fact, or a judgment that an explanation is correct.

If Metaphysics proposes to account for the structures of all reality, and if human wonder is part of all reality, then it must account also for the operating set of processes that guide our wonder. When they operate successfully, the processes form an integrated set. At the same time, they anticipate an integrated view of reality. And it is not just any view they anticipate, but, as far as possible, a correct view. In that respect, they anticipate the structures that are integral to the objective world we can know. This inclusion of subjective processes in objective structures is borne out in Lonergan's definition:

Metaphysics is the integral heuristic structure
of proportionate being

Let us put this in different words. If metaphysics deals with the inherent structures of all reality, then it should include the relationships between those who know reality and the realities they know. That is, it should include the dynamic openness that knowers have to knowns. Since knowers are driven by questions, and since the questions are prestructured in ways that anticipate the general features of the answers they seek, then metaphysics is a compound structure of knowers relying on structured knowing to know the structure of anything that exists. So we could paraphrase Lonergan's definition:

Metaphysics is the actual, working process by which knowers wonder about, and anticipate the major features of, anything that exists or might be created.

The metaphysician will produce the set of concepts about the structure of all reality. But the very task of producing an explicit metaphysics depends on whether he or she notices the latent metaphysics that shapes all human wonder.

From Latent to Explicit

We occasionally meet people who consistently pick out the right question and sidestep the wrong ones. They already know what can be expected of various lines of questioning. In this sense, in this prior expectation, they possess the heuristic structures of whatever can be known, and use them in their thinking. They as yet cannot tell you what these structures may be, but they depend on them all the same. In ethics, their heuristic anticipations show up as seemingly innate strategies such as these:

- Avoid approaches that are sheerly deductive.
- Avoid approaches that reduce responsible decision making to mere stimulus-response mechanisms, genetic coding, astrology, hexes, or other kinds of fatalist reductionism.
- Be self-skeptical, but don't keep questioning your hard-earned wisdom.
- Don't assume that you know what information is important and what is not.
- Don't just compile the practical suggestions of all parties. Rather, aim to get a higher viewpoint that integrates the well-founded suggestions and excludes the ill founded.
- You are not a cog in a historical machine that will bring good out of bad no matter what your personal intentions are. You make a difference to history.

- Beware of excluding your personal ethical wisdom in the transition from scientific research to policymaking.

Eventually, these shrewd men and women could suspend their curiosity about ethical issues and pay some attention to curiosity itself. They raise a personal intellectual issue: "How did I ever learn to discern the difference between good thinking and bad thinking? Is it just good genes?" Even there, they instinctively know that genes shape the brain, but the mind is another matter altogether. Now they have a new problem, an unanswered question about themselves. Their metaphysics has moved from a mode that is latent but workable to a mode that is problematic and inquires about itself.

Then it hits them. "I need to understand what happens in the mind." They experience an insight into the roots of all philosophy, an insight that Lonergan expressed as a general theorem:

Any philosophy,
 whether actual or possible

 will rest upon the dynamic structure of cognitional activity
 either as correctly conceived
 or as distorted by oversights and by mistaken
 orientations.¹⁰

Now they are ready to tackle in earnest the issues met by a cognitional theory, an epistemology, and an explicit metaphysics.

Basic knowable structures

Making explicit our intelligent anticipations

If our latent metaphysicians take up Lonergan's *Insight*, they may well grasp the basic structures of anything that anyone can know. This grasp involves more than understanding what Lonergan says. They will also verify these structures by noticing them at work in their experience. From this grasp, they can conceptualize in metaphysical categories what they have already grasped in a latent, operating mode.

Basic Structures

The basic structures apply not only to what we can know but also to what we can value, appreciate, admire, and seek. First, however, let me summarize the basic structures as Lonergan outlines them

¹⁰ *Insight*, p. 553 (530 in 1957 edition).

regarding what we can know. I have used a bold typeface to indicate these categories:

- Their working knowledge of the difference between the data to be understood and the understanding of that data they will name as **potency** and **form**, respectively.
- Their working knowledge of the difference between the data as understood and the understood data as also verified to exist in reality they will name as **form** and **act**, respectively.
- Their working knowledge of the difference between forms that govern many individual cases, and the form that makes the individual case individual they will name as **conjugate** form and **central** form, respectively—along with their correlative potencies and acts.
- Their belief that the human spirit is a reality in its own right, and cannot be reduced to psychological, biological, genetic, chemical or physical determinates is an affirmation of a world design by which conjugate acts are an assembly of **schemes of recurrence**. These schemes emerge in successively higher order, differentiated according to **genus** and **species**, and according to schedules of probability—making a world design that Lonergan names **emergent probability**.

Structures Especially Relevant to a Moral View of the Universe

There are different kinds of conjugate forms. That is, insofar as we expect to understand our universe, the insights by which we understand things fall into several classes. We can understand things as they currently function, or we can understand things as they develop.

Regarding things as they currently function, Lonergan leads the reader to verify that we have both direct insights and “inverse” insights. These correspond to two different kinds of intelligibilities—or “intelligible designs”—that may govern what we aim to understand.

A direct insight grasps correlations among elements. We understand the phases of the moon, the working of gravity, the nitrogen cycle—any process or set of events that recur. Lonergan calls this a **classical intelligibility**.

An inverse insight grasps that there is no direct insight available. We understand that random occurrences cannot be reduced to a classical law. But this limitation contains a positive element. If any individual random occurrence cannot be understood as linked to any other specific occurrence, at least an entire set of

random occurrences will cluster about some average. If suddenly a subset of occurrences varies from this average, we suspect that some correlation regarding individual elements has appeared. Lonergan calls the remainder of what does not fall under classical intelligibility a **statistical intelligibility**.

Besides these designs inherent in things as they currently function, there are designs inherent in things as they develop over time. Since ethics regards our efforts to do better, our ongoing, unfolding efforts also have an inherent intelligibility that we can understand. Here is where the metaphysical structures especially relevant to a moral view of the universe appear. Lonergan lays out two kinds of intelligibility inherent in human development. Again, each is based on the distinction between direct and inverse insights.

A direct insight into development will grasp some basic driving factor that keeps the development process moving. Lonergan calls this a **genetic intelligibility**.

An inverse insight into development will grasp that there is no basic driving factor that keeps the development process moving. Instead, there are at least two driving factors. These factors do not necessarily operate in unison regarding the developing organism or entity. Instead, they operate on each other as well as on the developing entity. He calls this a **dialectical intelligibility**.

Let us discuss each of these in detail.

Genetic Structures

What we understand when we understand development

First, consider genetic intelligibility. This is the design, the conjugate form, the "law," that we hope to understand when we ask how anything grows, unfolds, and blossoms.

Within a world design of emergent probability, Lonergan discerns a **finality** by which the universe produces higher and more organized systems. It is a design, an intelligibility inherent in reality.

The theorem of finality, Lonergan says, "affirms a parallelism between the dynamism of the mind and the dynamism of proportionate being."

A reminder is in place here. Lonergan is speaking from within the realm of theory—where insight grasps correlations between things, not features of realities "out there." So, in a perspective that envisions all of knowable reality, with a subset of knowers among the knowables, our immediate experience of curiosity is

but a single instance of being—all that is -- enlarging itself. With a simple poem, for example, the universe becomes more than it was.

In this perspective, the notion of potency takes on a meaning with profound importance for ethics. Potency covers all the possibilities latent in given realities to become intelligible elements of higher systems. Indeed, isn't this the working experience of our hypothetical shrewd thinkers? Do they not expect that things can have higher possibilities?

What sets them apart is not just their habit of finding uses in things others find useless. They expect that things improve themselves even without their help. Clusters of otherwise doomed white dwarf stars can converge into a powerful source of X-rays. Loons learn advantageous migration patterns. Our brains develop alternate paths of communication around scar tissue.

In a universe driven by finality, ethics is not simply about doing better. Still less is it restricted to avoiding certain actions. In this universal viewpoint, the whole universe is "good" in the sense that it contains a dynamism, a thrust, an exigency toward more intelligible organization. Human concern is an instance, indeed a most privileged instance, of a burgeoning universe. In us, a sense of this kind of finality will lead us to care for our environment, even when we have only glimmers of its potentials. It assumes that what naturally comes to be is to be respected, despite features that the simple-minded proclaim are distortions of nature or just some useless trash.

In the main, ethics is about *allowing* better. It means allowing not only the potentials of nature to reveal themselves but allowing as much freedom as we can to our innate imperative to do better. The choice is not exactly between good and evil. Nor even between better and worse. It is a choice between preventing and allowing our pure desire for the better to work. The part that feels like work is mainly preventive—preventing our psyches from fixating on narrow concerns, preventing our self-concern from diverting our concern for the better, preventing others from unduly influencing us, and preventing our mental impatience from taking short cuts off the path toward complete understanding. The rest does not feel like work. It feels more like a natural exuberance whose range has not been artificially restricted.

When we think of "the universe," we often picture the cosmos studied by astronomers. There, physicists follow a simple rule:

Any X either does or does not exist.

Without this rule, they could never build up a knowledge of what is and what is not. However, in cases like ourselves, where finality has produced intelligent and responsible consciousness, this rule doesn't cover all possibilities. Because we are able to recognize possible improvements, we can agree that any element X may or may not exist, but we add a moral dimension to the universe:

Some Xs *should* exist.

Recognition of finality, in other words, is a recognition that the world is not just a massive factual conglomeration. It is a self-organizing, dynamic and improving entity. Its moral character emerges with us, not only in the sense that we raise moral questions, but, more profoundly, in our latent sense of the meaning of the potency by which we recognize that anything that exists is potentially part of something better.

Genetic Structures of a Developing Moral Tradition.

A very concrete and practical issue within this perspective of the dynamism of reality toward fuller being, is the notion of **development**. Mechanists expect that every new thing that appears can be explained by physics and chemistry. Vitalists enjoy describing a wondrous life force driving atoms to get together to become molecules, molecules gathering their forces to become replicative DNA, whose strands line up to make chromosomes, who become members of cells, who flock together as organisms, who want to see, to hear, speak, and make decisions. Holistic philosophers see only a single large, impossibly complex system by which humans and other animals mature.

All these explanations are useless to anyone who wants to understand what a "moral tradition" is. We are not born with ideas about what is good and bad. We inherit these moral standards, subtract a bit of nonsense and add a bit of refinement. Our inheritance is likewise a sum of (a) a previous generation's inheritance, (b) the nonsense threw out, and (c) the refinements they added. All told, our moral tradition is essentially a sequence of moral standards, each linked to the past by an impure inheritance and to the future by the adding and subtracting bits.

In such a tradition, as the men and women of each generation add and subtract their bits, they rely on sources that stand outside the tradition. After all, they can hardly expect that the tradition itself will proclaim which of its features will meet unforeseen circumstances or will foster immorality. So, a moral tradition develops by a process that

alternates between consolidating gains and opening the door open for improvements.

This alternating process is a key factor in genetic growth. With the appearance of any new stage along a line of development, a higher system has emerged that both consolidates the gains it has made and then, as if unsatisfied with the new status quo, calls forth its own replacement by a higher system yet. Lonergan proposes two metaphysical categories that conceptualize this alternation. A **higher system as integrator** is the set of routines that consolidate the gains brought about by the higher system. A **higher system as operator** is the set of routines within the emerged system that precipitate the emergence of its replacement. Generally, the operators will be some kind of instability within the reigning system.

When it is a moral tradition that is developing, we can identify integrator functions and operator functions.

Value judgments perform the integrator functions. Their consolidating power is directly proportional to the absence of relevant questions (upon which, as we saw, all value judgments rely). We regard some elements as rock solid because no one has raised any significant questions about them.

Value questions perform the operator functions. While various provisional elements function as integrators to a certain extent, to the extent that we know they are provisional, our lingering questions function as operators. That is, we have doubts about many elements of our tradition, and, while we continue to rely on them, it is less as rocks to stand on and more as rocks to flag for possible replacement. Still other elements may be exposed as based on a naive biology or cosmology. Some may be exposed as biased. They could be rooted in a neurotic obsession, on a self-serving administrator's ego, on the pride of an ethnic, national or religious group, or on failures to think matters through.

In a developing moral tradition, nothing settles us more firmly than our feelings. Once we make a value judgment, our psyches combine our feelings with an image of the object to which we are responding. Lonergan names this combination of feelings and an image a **symbol**. (This is a metaphysical category that identifies an event in consciousness; it is not to be confused with the visible flags and icons we also call "symbols.")

For example, we feel either alienated or invited by the sight of a church. We see a woman driving a BMW and we feel jealously, or

resentment, or admiration. So too with banks, high-rises, rock music, rabbis, teenagers, gardens, perfume, politicians, firefighters, and so on. We do not think about them outside of the symbols that incorporate how we feel about them.

The concrete, functioning set of symbols that suffuse our attention filters how we see our social institutions, various classes of people, and our natural environment. They make it easy for us to respond smoothly without having to reassess everything in new situations. So, while our actual value judgments act as integrators, what they integrate is our judgments of value with our feelings and our imagination.

The operators in a developing tradition are the insights we have into arrangements that make more sense. These bring to the bar of our moral judgment a proposition that "Action X will improve situation Y." As a tradition develops, insights improve situations, and improved situations, having less going wrong, make it easier for insight to spot further improvements. Lonergan often describes the process as circular. A situation has some problems. We get an insight into what's wrong and an idea about how to improve it. We put our idea into practice. Now we have a new situation with fewer problems. And so on.

Keep in mind that our focus here is on a moral tradition that is developing. This is a pure case, of course, since actual traditions are laced with factors that cripple and sometimes destroy that development. With these, we anticipate not a purely genetic intelligibility but also a dialectical intelligibility, which we will consider shortly.

Genetic Structures of Personal Moral Development

Although the operators that improve a tradition are questions in the minds of men and women, not all our questions actually function as operators. Some of our value questions are poorly expressed, even to ourselves. We remain disturbed, but have yet to pose the question in a way that actually results in a positive change. Some of our value questions are based on biased understanding, so we end up depleting the moral capital of a community. Only those individuals who pose the questions that actually add values, or remove disvalues, will function as operators in an improving tradition. This explains quite exactly what makes any tradition improve. It is not the number of cultural institutions; not governmental support of the arts; not legal protections for freedom of thought; not freedom of religion. All such institutions are supports to the operators, and need to be regulated as such. But the operators themselves are the men and women who put

values above satisfactions, including the value of such difficult philosophical reflections as these.

How does one become such a person? To answer that question, we first need to understand the process of our personal moral development.

Again, we can expect that our answer will be an alternating series of operators and integrators. Lawrence Kohlberg proposed that a "normal" moral development has six distinguishable steps beyond a "zero" starting point.¹¹

(0) In infants, desires alone dominate. (1) In children, the desire to avoid punishment and gain rewards dominates. (2) In youngsters, intelligence sees that reward/punishment is only one possible strategy, and other strategies make more sense, including cooperation for mutual gain. (3) In early teens, affectivity and interpersonal relationships open up the world of objective values, of which intelligent strategies are only a part. (4) Later teens appreciate a social order and authority as they encompass their affective worlds. (5) Young adults recognize different ways to set up social orders; they freely critique authorities. (6) Mature adults discover that what counts ultimately are universal standards on whatever is reasonable and worthwhile.

Each stage is not a replacement of an earlier stage but an emergence of a higher system that maintains the lower from a more widely intelligible perspective. Each stage both consolidates gains and exposes new needs and opportunities that only a further stage can meet. So each stage but the last not only has an integrator function but an operator function.

But this is just a model; it represents what one theorist thinks normal moral development is all about. Actual men and women develop at different rates, with some surprisingly wise at a young age while others stagnate at a middle stage long into their old age. The value of the model is that it clarifies for us what kind of answer will really explain moral development. To understand the concrete moral horizon of any person, the model of integrator-operator sequence gives us a powerful heuristic structure of the key feature we need to grasp. We grasp it by asking, What is the operator? The moral horizon of any person will be the product of a sequence of operators, and, to the

¹¹ Kohlberg, L. and Turiel, E., "Moral development and moral education," in G. Lesser, ed. *Psychology and educational practice* (Scott Foresman, 1971).

extent that any operator was not completely successful, their present moral horizon will lack full development.

For example, imagine a 21-year-old woman talking about the deficiencies of her mother. She may appear to be in Kohlberg's fifth stage, where the ability to see the sources of rules and authorities emerges. But suppose she had only a weak grasp of the importance of interpersonal relationships back at stage three. The operator at that stage was some form of the question, Are people more important than my ideas? To the extent that her assent was weak, she will have only a partial view of all authorities at stage four, and move on to critiquing her mother and all other authorities with a low regard for the battles that mutual love and affection may have required of them.

Again, our hypothetical shrewd men and women will anticipate that a person's age doesn't correlate directly with moral maturity. When they promote this latent metaphysical structure to explicit knowledge, they can conceptualize their question much more precisely: Did this woman, or man, meet the sequence of operator questions successfully?

I will leave to you to name what the operators may be at any stage of any development presented by any theorist. I predict that when you find it difficult to specify the operator it's because the theorist only *described* the stage. What is necessary is an explanatory account of the stage *as integrator* that connects directly to an explanation of the operator on which the new stage depends.

Dialectical Structures

What we understand when we understand the unfolding of opposing forces

The genetic model of development gives us a "normal" pattern. With it, we can see the general outlines of how any person or community developed. We can also anticipate, to some extent, the higher level integrations in store for young people and fledgling communities. But this doesn't end our questions. No concrete community or person is a textbook example of the model. Each of us is somewhat "abnormal." The way we met each situation in our lives shaped how we met the next one. Who we are is gathering, a condensation, an incarnation of the historical string of challenges and decisions that happened to have shaped our lives. So there is a fourth kind of intelligibility available that accounts for concrete historical growth or decline. Lonergan names it a dialectical intelligibility.

It not an anticipation of some singular law, such as the law of gravity or Boyle's law. (Classical intelligibility)

Nor is it an anticipation of some norm, about which similar events cluster, such as the law of averages. (Statistical intelligibility)

Nor is it an anticipation of a law that drives growth along a predetermined line, such as the law of diminishing returns, or the alternation of assimilation and adjustment routines (integrator and operator, respectively) with which Piaget explained how children grow in intelligence. (Genetic intelligibility)

Rather it is an anticipation of some tension among drivers of development and changes in these very drivers, depending on the path that the actual development takes. (Dialectical intelligibility)

When our curiosity anticipates either a classical or a genetic structure, we expect to find a law that governs not only how things have worked in the past, but also how they would work under a variety of future circumstances. This is because both anticipations are based on direct insights into correlations among elements that will not change. So we have a good idea of how gravity will work on Alpha Centauri and how an acorn will be an oak. On the other hand, when we expect either a statistical or a dialectical structure, we look for an explanation of how things happen to be the way they are, but we do not have any specific expectation of how they will behave in the future. This is because both of these anticipations are based on the inverse insight that there is no correlation among the elements taken singly; we can only discover the average after the fact. So we cannot predict either the weather or the future of a friendship.

Dialectical Structures of Friendship

A friendship is a good example of a dialectical reality. We have ideals of friendship, and many books about how to keep it alive, but the friendship itself is a concrete, unfolding reality. It requires attention, nurturing, and care. It has been compared to a garden that needs tending, but this analogy is misleading. What we understand about gardens falls under genetic intelligibility. The seeds of growth will produce vegetables, fruits and flowers; all we have to do is provide the nutrients. However, in a friendship, each partner becomes changed with each compromise, accommodation, resistance or refusal. So the inner dynamic of any friendship is a concrete unfolding of two personalities, each of which is linked to the other yet able to oppose

the other as he or she sees fit. This is just one example of the dynamic we anticipate in a variety of areas relevant to morality.

So, speaking generally about this dynamic, Lonergan defines a dialectic as "a concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles of change."¹²

Dialectical Structures of Community

Another example of a dialectical reality is "community." Again, we have our ideals and our guidelines, but the community itself is a concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles of change. In any community, the way its members perceive things, the patterns of their behavior, their ways of collaborating and disputing, and all their shared values and purposes are the concrete result of two principles: (1) their spontaneous intersubjectivity and (2) their practical intelligence.

Spontaneous Intersubjectivity. We do not have to think about belonging to a community. We are its products and it is our environment. We share the spontaneous routines of the birds and bees. We nest, we hive, we take to our kind. The primitive, intersubjective dimensions of community are based on our needs and wants.

Practical Intelligence. We also get insights into how to meet our needs and wants more efficiently. We not only design our houses to fit our circumstances, we let others build them. In exchange, others let us make their bread, drive them to work, care for their sick. Now the ordered dimensions of community emerge, based on our intelligence and reason.

These two principles are linked. Spontaneously, we seek out particular goods that we want. But intellectually, we discover technology and the economy. We get the point that we might forgo our spontaneous needs in a way that, by collaboration, will meet more of our needs, and more regularly.

Yet the principles are forever opposed. Pure intellect relies on insights, while pure spontaneous intersubjectivity relies on immediately felt needs and animal sensitivity. Insight often suppresses the urges of passion, while passion would carry us along its undertow were it not for the tether of intelligence.

These two principles unfold in our community, and our community is the concrete result of that unfolding. But this unfolding can go in any

¹² *Insight* p. 242 (217 in 1957 edition).

of many directions, since the two principles themselves become changed at each turn of events. When spontaneous intersubjectivity becomes totally dominant in a community, we have mindless brutes driven by animal passion. When practical intelligence does not consider the needs of spontaneous intersubjectivity, we have effete societies with their heads in the clouds. The rest of us fall somewhere along that spectrum, depending on the concrete string of accommodations of primitive needs to intelligence and compromises of intelligence to primitive needs.

To set this into the context of ethics, we need to notice three enlargements that Lonergan made to this picture.

Bias. The first is that the intelligence that we hope would put some sense into our spontaneous bonding with each other is a crippled intelligence. As we saw, Lonergan listed his four biases as ways in which we flee from understanding. So the dialectic between immediate needs and intelligent ordering cannot be the whole story, if there is to be any concrete unfolding of a community to the level of full maturity.

Pure Desire for the Better. Lonergan also noted that the unlimited character of our intelligence is but a part of the unlimited character of our morality. The pure desire to know is but the cognitive dimension of a pure desire for the good. Concretely, this appears as a persistent and unlimited desire for what is better. We saw that the biases of intelligence distort the knowledge on which our value judgments depend. But we also saw that there are the far worse occasions where we act against our better judgment. So the possibility of a morally mature community has to be based on some further factor.

Affective Conversion. Besides a spontaneous intersubjectivity, there is a commitment to friendship, loyalty to one's country, and faith in God. Commitment is what makes the difference between a converted affectivity and an affectivity that is spontaneous and more or less in continuity with the birds and bees.

With affective conversion, it becomes clear that the concrete unfolding of any community is better understood as a dialectic between three principles.

There are our spontaneous needs and wants, and the primitive dimensions of community that they comprise.

There is our practical intelligence, and the intelligently ordered dimensions of community that they comprise. Unfortunately,

because we flee from understanding, the ordered dimensions of any actual community chronically include the disorders in every scheme, plan, habit, skill, and institution.

Third, then, is the healing power of a commitment to being in love. Being in love can heal the biases of intelligence and halt our flight from understanding. Moreover, it can turn us away from considering personal satisfactions as the only criterion for making decisions and turn us toward the universe of what is truly better. Being in love and undergoing moral conversion underpin the culture of any community—its dimension of true values.

We noted that when we want to understand how the moral horizon of a person or a community developed, we should expect to find operators and integrators. That is, we look for the questions about value prompted by insights, and the consolidations of moral outlooks carried by symbols and rooted in value judgments.

Here, however, we zoom in closer to actual persons and communities in their messy historical reality. Bias distorts our insights, crippling the operator. To put it graphically, our guts, our minds and our hearts are dialectically related. To understand how persons or communities happen to be such as they are, we also need to anticipate that there will be intelligence that drives genuine development, bias that subverts intelligence, and a healing of the biased intelligence. Specifically, we can expect that the healing will be the values that spring from being in love.

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4. *An Existential Ethics*

What changes happen in me?

The person doing cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics

We stand on our own.

I trust that when you read the material on cognitional theory you took it not just as an exposition but also as an invitation. You may not have understood everything completely, nor verified that the all operations relevant to ethics occur as I suggested. But let my invitation stand, along with my encouragement that you finish verifying what you only understood, and that that you let yourself think differently on account of what you have verified. In any case, to the degree that you have personally realized how you make value judgments, along with all the factors that condition them and result from them, you have become a changed person.

The Intellectual Dimension

Most of our focus has been on the intellectual dimension of that change in you. Ideally, you have realized how your knowing operates in two modes -- common sense, and theoretical. You have successfully grasped the intelligible relations between the value judgments we make and the values they affirm. You have settled the question of the meaning of "objectivity" in value judgments and have verified that this kind of objectivity is not only possible but also surprisingly common. And you have made explicit the heuristic anticipations latent in all your wondering, and in anyone else's who is concerned about doing better. In short, you have undergone an intellectual conversion in a manner that you can explain.

If you have matured intellectually to the point where you have more or less mastered the issues raised in the first three questions, you will be new selves. The "principles" of your ethics—the real starting point -- is not a set of rules or conceptualized standards. Ultimately, it is the intelligent, reasonable and responsible selves you have become. You may have always wanted to make a difference in the world, but there is an intellectually transformed "you" that wants it.

The Moral Dimension

Again speaking ideally, along the way you made an implicit moral conversion explicit. I presume you have personally committed yourself to the truly worthwhile over the merely satisfying; after all, you're not

plowing through a work like this for fun. But by understanding the profound difference between a horizon of the merely satisfying and a horizon of the truly good, you also have a conceptualized understanding of what has happened to you. You can talk about it, clearly, intelligently, and unambiguously.

The Affective Dimension

Moreover, I presume you came to this study with an affective horizon that included the absolute source and object of your loving. Perhaps that horizon was only implicit. This often happens in people who talk religious talk but who have yet to notice that their loving is a gift from a loving God. It also happens in people who eschew religious talk but who live in gratitude to a nameless provider. Ideally, however, you made explicit an implicit affective conversion—the final opening onto the total universe of love.

The emergence of a personal ethical stance.

A mounting of conversions

This ideal picture illustrates how an affective conversion is what makes a moral conversion concretely possible. A moral conversion, in turn, may expand to the point of seeing the value of knowing something about knowing and investigating all the elements necessary for a fully explicit intellectual conversion.

Besides this view of how one conversion is functionally related to another, there is also a view of how an existential ethics is rooted in the conversions. Lonergan once described the emergence of this existential ethics as a series of expansions: ¹³

The beginning. The discovery that my life is up to me.
Whatever is worth doing, my person is part of the worth. (Moral Conversion)

¹³ In a 1976 article, 'Questionnaire on Philosophy,' (*METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 2:2 [Oct 1984] 5-7,25), Lonergan lists 'existential ethics' as a fourth step following upon cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics. It begins with the discovery that we are responsible for the life we lead. It becomes established when we live in love. It becomes transformed when God's own love floods our hearts, a love without limits, a love which is "loving God above all, and 'one's neighbor as oneself, and the world, in which we live with all it contains, as God's own world" (p 7). It becomes thematized as a concern of a theology which can sublimate the whole of human living only by "broadening its horizon by uniting itself with philosophy as the basic and total science."

The establishment. The experience of falling in love with other persons, and with my community. The objects of my love are of the highest values. (Basic Affective Conversion)

The transformation. God floods our hearts with a love that has no limits. It goes beyond neighbor and community to God, as well as to all that God has created. (Transcendent Affective conversion)

The thematization. We put into concepts and words the foundations of a theology, particularly a theology integrated with a full-scale philosophy of science. This is the foundation Lonergan refers to in the functional specialty "foundations." (Intellectual Conversion)

Standing on this rock, as it were, we work out the details of a method in ethics that can address the situations around us.

An existential foundation for a methodical ethics

Subjective, Objective, and Scientific

A common sense approach to ethics may well praise the converted person. But typically, common sense does not see how a person's personal stand could possibly be a factor in an ethics that claims to be scientific. The reasoning runs like this:

I cannot compel anyone else to accept the horizon in which I live. Conversion, after all, is not a deduction. It is not a logical step. It is a shift to an entirely new context, with new terms, new meanings for old terms, and a new community I feel I belong to. If ethics is to be truly scientific, it must exclude any subjective presuppositions and focus exclusively on the objectively good or bad things people do.

The Role of Subjectivity

Everything is true about this reasoning except the last sentence about excluding subjectivity. It is a common misunderstanding that science has no place for subjectivity. This view is supported by the success of the natural sciences and their exclusive reliance on observable, quantifiable data. But the human sciences study humans, and humans can have radically different intellectual, moral and affective horizons. This is true not only of the humans studied by the scientists, but also of the humans that the scientists happen to be. The world of meaning in which the humans investigated live may be foreign to the human investigator. Like as a woman deaf from birth who will never have an insight into the music that a ballet dancer is following, a morally

unconverted man will never have an insight into the harmonies that a Mother Teresa listens to.

As we saw, Lonergan tackles this seeming inability to get an independent stance on reality by moving to the theoretical way of understanding. Theoretical understanding grasps correlations among things, some of which are subjects and some objects.

The fundamental correlation is precisely between the subjects who value and the objects they value.

This correlation changes radically with changes in the intellectual, moral or affective horizons of the subjects.

So a method in the human sciences will require a way of dealing with the differences in horizons that we may expect. It will also require that we thematize the converted horizons so that we can talk to our collaborators in the science of ethics intelligently.

Is It Scientific Method?

Lonergan proposes that this method meets the criteria for any science. He defines method as a “normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results.” Let us take a closer look at each of these elements.

- Results. A method is not a result, not even a set of results. It is a way of getting results.
- Operations. The method comprises the operations we perform to get results.
- Pattern. These are not just any operations. There is a discernable pattern in the set of operations.
- Related. They work together. Operations that do not fit intelligibly into the pattern do not belong to the method.
- Recurrent. They work not just once, but regularly, over and over, getting the results that the method aims to bring about.
- Normative. The pattern of operations is not just logically coherent. A method must give clues to guide us toward results. And it must set the standards by which we determine that we reached the results.
- Cumulative. A method must put together partial results into whole results. These wholes, in turn, may become

partial results to be integrated within results that accumulate results upon results.

Progressive. Methods are followed by humans. The cumulative results must fall under the notion of "better" that all humans anticipate. The normative character of the pattern must fall under the full normative scope of human moral consciousness. Any set of operations governed by norms that diminish the human cannot be considered scientific, since they would violate the very intelligence on which all science grounds its claims.

Lonergan offers this definition to head off any objections that by incorporating the horizon of the subject he cannot possibly lay claim to scientific objectivity. This "method" includes all the operations of the subject, with a demonstrable meaning to their "objectivity," and the intelligible features of the objects known by the subject.

To make this normative pattern of operations in us an explicit method, Lonergan relates them directly to how science moves from research, through assessment and commitment, to policymaking, planning and implementation.¹⁴ In our next section, we will spell this out in detail.

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¹⁴ For Lonergan's overall description of how the conversions unfold into the multiple elements of an explicit existential ethics, see *Method in Theology* (NY: Herder & Herder , 1972) pp. 267-269.

5. *A Methodical Ethics*

How does ethics make progress?

The Method of Ethics

Wind your way forward.

Different institutions tend to subdivide the field of ethics in different ways. News media divide it according to the positions people take on issues like capital punishment, euthanasia, and nuclear weapons research. Many university textbooks divide it into three related disciplines:

Methods of ethics. Or “metaethics.”

Principles of ethics. Or “normative ethics.”

Case studies. Or “practical ethics.”

This division is deceptively logical. It implies that we first settle issues of method, then establish general moral “principles,” and finally apply those principles in practice. This seems plausible enough. This is how the natural sciences work—first master the method of empirical science, then use that method to formulate the laws of nature that you discover, and finally apply those laws in a variety of practical areas.

However, we saw that the range of ethics covers everything that humans can think up, and that our everyday assessments are practically all provisional. We saw that our moral development is hardly a straight line. It is a historical, moving reality. If it were a genetic kind of development, then perhaps “principles” would be the operators. But we found that the real “principles”—spontaneous intersubjectivity, practical intelligence, and moral horizon—modify each other as our lives unfold, both individually and communally. So, instead of a deductive, 3-step division of ethics, we do better to notice that the process is cyclical or, to connote its progressive character, the process winds forward like a spiral.

In his *Method in Theology*, Lonergan laid out eight specializations of human reflection, each based on functional relationships with the other seven. We learn about the past and present through research, interpretation, history, and dialectic. We move into the future through foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. The future arrives soon enough, and the cyclic reflection process continues, turn after turn, spiraling forward or backward, reversing or advancing the forces of decline, and meeting ever new challenges or buckling under the current ones.

It's important to keep in mind that these are not necessarily "professional specializations;" nor are they really "Lonergan's method" that people apply in their various disciplines. Essentially they are eight basic groups of operations of mind and heart that yield results with special functional relationships to each other. They are the innate, subtle, deft, but wonderfully intricate methods of mind by which we actually do better.

The process is not restricted to theology. It occurs in any science. With respect to the human sciences, Lonergan associates his theological *doctrines, systematics, and communications* with *policy, planning and execution*, respectively. Unfortunately, where scientists fail to understand these innate groupings of their minds and hearts, they move forward haltingly, or stall, or think that backward is some sort of forward. The process is prone to other breakdowns, rooted mainly in biases endemic to consciousness and to the several ways conversion may be absent.

Here is how Lonergan has sketched the specializations. In both retrieving our past and moving into our future, we specialize according to distinguishable levels of our consciousness.

<i>Level of Consciousness</i>	<i>Retrieving the Past</i>	<i>Moving into the Future</i>
<i>Being Responsible</i>	Dialectic	Foundations
<i>Being Reasonable</i>	History	Doctrines / Policymaking
<i>Being Intelligent</i>	Interpretation	Systematics / Planning
<i>Being Attentive</i>	Research	Communications / Implementation

The bottom three rows will be familiar to anyone involved in practically any enterprise.

Prior to dialectic, there are the specialties of research, interpretation and factual history, which bring the investigator to a cognitive grasp of the relevant data, an understanding of what the data means, and how this meaning is part of some specific community's ongoing history.

Following upon foundations, there are the specialties of establishing what is true and better about these meanings and

histories (doctrines/policies), developing a systematic understanding of the these truth and "better" statements (systematics/planning), and communicating or implementing the results of this systematic understanding (communications/implementation).

The top row is less familiar, but it represents Lonergan's major contribution to the real foundations of any enterprise.

Dialectic names a group of evaluative processes. We evaluate the data of research, the explanations of interpretation, and the accounts of history. As part of these evaluative processes, to minimize the odds of error, we bring together different people with different evaluations with a view to working out differences.

Foundations names a group of processes associated with commitment. It relies on the evaluations and mutual encounters of dialectic. It involves selecting the horizon and commitments upon which we will base any improvements. It becomes thematized insofar as we make explicit an implicit metaphysics, giving us the explanatory categories with which to express ethical standards, guidelines and rules.

It is important to notice that Lonergan restricts his meaning of "foundations" to the operations carried out by the triply converted person. The partially converted, in other words, lack the foundations he holds are basic. Presumably their doctrines will misrepresent the full truth, or their policies will be unwarranted to some extent. Their explanations of what their doctrines mean will contain anomalies, and their plans will be lopsided. When it comes to educating others or implementing their plans, they usually make matters worse.

In theology, the partially converted do not engage in doctrines, systematics and communications as Lonergan has defined these specialties. They may teach doctrine, publish a systematic theology, and communicate what they think, but Lonergan does not grant them status in a method defined as "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations that produce cumulative and progressive results" because, frankly, he doesn't think they produce such results.

Similarly in ethics, there will be specialties that regard policies, plans and implementation. But these can only be called "methodical" if they produce cumulative and progressive results. This is not elitist name-calling. It's a habit of mind that understands the entire process by which self-appropriation and conversion unfold into cumulative and progressive results.

All these specializations work together unto good. Ethics is not a job specialization, as if questions about values can be delegated to some committee. Nor should ethics be confined to a college major alongside sociology, economics, and the like. Essentially, ethics is the heart's concern about values everywhere. The promotion of the human good is the goal of every human reflection, not solely reflections on what should be outlawed. Ethics also includes capitalizing on opportunities and exercising creativity across the entire range of meanings available to us -- the immediate and practical, the remote and theoretical, the aesthetic and literary, the historical and scholarly, the ascetic and mystical, the philosophical and theological. Sadly, this broad view of ethics is not very popular. We often hear observations like, "She is opposed to embryonic stem-cell research for ethical reasons," as if other reasons that support a value judgment are beyond the range of ethics.

Foundational Categories for Ethics

The dimensions and dynamic of "good."

A major task of the functional specialty, foundations, is to develop explanatory categories. These categories will put into words the personal foundations of the converted subject. Foundations will also involve developing categories applicable to special disciplines, which Lonergan does for theology in *Method in Theology*.

Since our focus is on ethics, let us review some of its special foundational categories. There are four that seem particularly important: (1) the structure of the good, (2) the nature of authority, (3) the historical dynamic of the good, and (4) rights and duties.

The Structure of the Good

We have already covered the basic notions in our section on metaphysics. We noted that the meaning of "good" is not univocal. It contains the three distinct but interconnected dimensions of particular goods, a good of order, and values. We saw that these are not just static aspects of any situation. They represent the three drivers of change that bring about any situation. These drivers are linked to each other, but also in a dialectical tension with each other.

It will warrant some repetition if we review this from several angles. Consider, for example, our personal experience as members of a community.

As conscious, sentient animals, we spontaneously bond with our kind. We are driven by our urges and dragged by our lethargy. We feel our desires and fears as no one else can feel them.

These factors form the primitive base of our community.

As intelligent, practical thinkers, we get insight into how to deal with our urges and apprehensions, as well as into how to fulfill our desires and deal with our fears. The presence of insight and judgment provides the base for a society, understood as the intelligent ordering of peoples' skills and habits for collaborative ends.

As moral and affective evaluators, we assess both our spontaneous reactions and the ordering of our skills and habits by the institutions of our society. We make our assessments within horizons that may or may not be converted, either morally or affectively. The presence of responsibility and love provides the base for a culture, understood as a community of people who make life genuinely better.

We can also look at this from the perspective of someone assessing how well a community is doing. This could be a sociologist, a cultural anthropologist, a political scientist, a historian, a philosopher or a theologian. It could be an administrator, a business competitor, an employee, or a reporter. And let us assume that our investigator has undergone an intellectual conversion to the extent that he or she realizes that a community is a reality with both subject and objective dimensions.

The investigator does basic research, wondering about what individuals hope to gain or avoid. The focus is simply on what people happen to want or need, regardless of whether or not their wants are appropriate. These may be tangible commodities, services received, or specific kinds of experiences.

The investigator does basic analysis, wondering about the process or setup that delivers these particular "goods." Here the focus is on the policies, agreements, assignments of roles, and the flows of money and materials that regularly produce or prevent the particular goods coming our way. Again, these questions are empirical; they are not about moral appropriateness.

The investigator does basic assessment, wondering about moral appropriateness—both of the particular things and of the setups that deliver them. Here the focus is on worth of the things and the setups, the moral stance of individuals, the cultural values of communities, and the personal relationships that sustain and refine these values. (The investigator does not rely on a community's stated ideals or stated values, except as evidence

concerning their operative ideals and values.)

Schematically, the heuristic structure of the good to be discovered looks like this:

Individual Dimension	Communal Dimension	Analogous Meaning of "Good"
<i>Needs, Desires</i>	<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>Particular Good</i>
<i>Insights, Judgments of Fact, Habits, Skills, Development</i>	<i>Institution, Setup, Process, Roles, Tasks</i>	<i>Good of Order</i>
<i>Moral Orientation, Judgments of Value, Conversions, Originating Values</i>	<i>Personal Relations</i>	<i>Terminal Value</i>

Each of these three dimensions has an individual and a communal dimension. Particular goods require some individual activity, and shared particular goods require cooperation. The good of order appears in the ordered skills and habits of those who support the process, and in the institutions that collaborating individuals constitute, adding a social dimension to what a collection of individuals happen to do. Operative values are rooted in the moral orientation of the individual, some of whom will have undergone the threefold conversion and others not. Collectively, such individuals are the origins of values, and they form personal relations by sharing common values, adding a cultural dimension to a social order.

It's easy to see the relationships between these concepts. Too easy, in fact. What is needed is not merely a conceptual grasp, but a working knowledge, and that takes the self-awareness, practice, and reflection that go with a cognitional theory, an epistemology, and a metaphysics. A working knowledge of moral structures means that we habitually raise questions about every dimension.

For example, take violence on television. We can anticipate that this issue will be a compound of particular goods, a good of order, and an operative set of values, with each dimension partitioning into an individual and a communal aspect.

Regarding particular goods, we ask about particular TV programs, particular expectations of viewers, and particular shared experiences.

Regarding the routines that make a good of order, we ask about what habits of mind viewers bring and how TV changes these habits. We ask about how the TV industry actually works, who sets the content and why. If we're on the inside, we can discern who really listens to whom and by what criteria decisions are actually made, despite what any Mission Statement may say. We know too that the setup is dynamic; what we learned about things last month may have changed this month. And any changes we envision have to take into account the ripple effect throughout the system, along with the usual reactions and blocks by defenders of the status quo.

Regarding the worth of it all, we ask about the value of the particular goods and the actual setup that keeps them flowing. We criticize not only particular programs but also the policies—social and domestic—that keep bad programs coming. Positively, we search for better particular programs and better policies that might encourage creativity along lines better suited to human dignity.

Lonergan often said that the good is concrete. Because it's concrete, its primary expression is in deeds, not words. While good deeds are more praiseworthy than good words, they are also gives more reliable evidence on what the good really is in any situation. We more quickly make ethical assessments when we interpret behaviors—including the efforts at making words—than when we just understand the words.

The Nature of Authority

Whenever we talk about ethics and morality, the discussion gets around to authority.

Does A have the authority to say what's right and what's wrong?

Does A have the authority to command compliance and punish noncompliance?

Did A get this authority legitimately?

Do authorities have the authority to break their own laws?

Whether we answer Yes or No these questions, the next question will be Why? or Why Not? And this leads us to the more basic question of what authority is in the first place.

This is a question concerning the intrinsic intelligibility of authority. We can deal with authority, and consequently with authorities, far more intelligently if we first reach some understanding of the nature of authority.

Metaphysically, authority is about potency. Or, to put it into more familiar terms, it's about *power*. Power is the ability to get things done. It is a potentiality for being an efficient or formal cause. Power, however, shares the three analogous meanings that "good" has:

Personal Power: Individuals have power to pursue their personal goals.

Communal Power: Cooperating individuals have a greatly multiplied power to pursue common goals.

Legitimate Power: These powers may be exercised either authentically or unauthentically.

Essentially, power resides in the actual ways a community cooperates. This vast, complex, and shifting set of agreements and processes is the primary meaning of "getting things done." We seldom think of this so concretely. We often think of power as what a community delegates to its authorities, with the rank and file being relatively "powerless." But the lesson of history is that the greatest power lies where the greatest cooperation occurs, whether under a dictator or in a democracy.

In the world of immediacy, power is physical. And because many hands make light work, cooperation multiplies physical power. But in the world mediated by meanings and values, power is mediated by insights and value judgments. Insights are expressed in words, words raise questions of value, judgments of value lead to decisions, decisions result in cooperation, and cooperation vastly reduces the physical work needed for vastly better results. It is because of cooperation mediated by the meanings and values conveyed by words that we have any traditions at all, any technological progress, and any cohesiveness in communities.

So in any cooperating community beyond the Neanderthal, there are expressions of insights and values. We can call any such expression, the *word* of authority. It is the community's complex, ongoing "word of authority" that consolidates the gains of the past, restricts behaviors that would diminish the community's power to get things done, spells out moral guidelines for the future, and organizes labors for specific tasks. It is the community's word of authority that appoints legal *authorities* to communicate its guiding insights and goals. And it is the

community's word of authority that replaces one legal authority with another.

An *authority* is simply a person entrusted to convey the community's "word of authority." The men and women we call authorities are spokespersons, delegates, and caretakers of a community's spiritual and material assets. We may vote them into a position of authority, but this does not confer an authority upon them; it confers a responsibility upon them to speak the community's word of authority. Even when we respect the prophetic voices among us, we are not paying respect to an authority residing within them, but rather we are recognizing the ways they represent the power of the entire community.

While authority resides in the ways and means of a community, not all ways of getting things done are legitimate. A Hitler got things done. He was a man of power. So we come to the third analog of power, namely, *legitimacy*. We considered what authority is about (power), where it resides (in community), how it is expressed (words), and how it is delegated (authorities), but we have not yet considered its intrinsic intelligibility. Lonergan gives it in this definition:

Authority is legitimate power.¹⁵

Legitimacy, in turn, is based on authenticity. And power is the ability to get things done.

Authority, then, is the ability among authentic men and women to get things done.

This definition of authority puts a normative slant on the authority in a community and in its authorities. To avoid a bit of confusion here between *authenticity* and *authority*, let me use *integrity* instead of authenticity.

To the extent that *a community* lacks integrity, its metaphysical potency is diminished. It may appear to have a "power" to tear down, but this is not "authority." This is essentially an *absence* of authority, considered as a power to build up. In the long haul of history, only integrity overcomes the bias that undermines a community's power to make progress.

To the extent that *authorities* lack integrity, their metaphysical potency is diminished. They will be blind to genuinely better ideas, even if, in the short term, everyone does what they say.

¹⁵ "The Dialectic of Authority," *A Third Collection*, p. 5

In practically every case, the dynamic becomes messy because there is some conflict between the integrity of the community and the integrity of its authorities. A noble leader of egotists has no more effective authority than an egotistical leader of noble followers.

We will return to this messy dynamic under “dialectic,” below.

The Historical Dynamic of the Good

When reviewed material on the threefold structure of the human good, we saw that it is a conceptual model that identifies the relationships between the analogous meanings of “good.” In most places where he presents this material, Lonergan extends his analysis to explain the outlines of how any community develops historically. He explains how the operators of insight drive social progress, how these operators suffer moral wounds, and how these wounds are healed. By referring to his analysis as an “analytical philosophy of history,” he means to distance himself from Darwinian, Hegelian and Marxist anticipations of an exclusively genetic intelligibility.

All particular needs and wants change, all institutions evolve, and all moral priorities shift—some slowly, some quickly. They have a history of meeting challenges, a present way of operating, and certain commitments that will shape their future. Some arrangements will collapse and others will expand. With an anticipation of a triple dialectic, any investigator has the tools for understanding how historical situations came to be.

The driver of progress is insight. We experience a situation and feel the impulse to improve it. We spot what’s missing, or else some overlooked potentials. We express our insight to others, getting their validation or refinement. We make a plan and put it into effect. The situation improves, bringing us back to feeling yet further impulses to improve things. The odds of spotting new opportunities grow as, with each turn of the cycle, more and more of what doesn’t make sense is replaced by what does. So it is that good situations tend to get better.

The driver of decline is oversight. Again, we experience a situation and an impulse to improve it. But we don’t spot what’s missing; we mistake what works for what doesn’t. We express our oversight to others, making it out to be an insight, of course. If they lack any critical eye, they take us on our word rather than bother to validate what we called our insight. We make a plan, put it into effect, and discover later that, somehow, things got worse. Now the situation has an additional anomaly. The odds of spotting opportunities for improving things decrease, owing to the additional complexity and

cross-purposes of the anomalies. With each turn of the cycle, less and less makes sense. And so it is that bad situations tend to get worse.

Still, this is not the whole story. There are also saving factors at work. They appear precisely where the driver of decline does its mischief. That is, the saving factors operate where we have oversights. Where do we have oversights? Lonergan gives four areas:

Neurotics resist insight into their neuroses.

Egoists resist insight into benefiting others.

Loyalists resist insights into the good of other groups.

That celebrated Person of Common Sense resists getting insights that require any thorough investigation, theory-based analyses, long-range planning, and broad implementation.

A good example of this fourth bias is how highly but uncritically we prize creativity today. On Lonergan's analysis, progress may result from creative insights, but we resist insights. More creativity is not the answer to minds that already exclude insights that scare them.

The driver of recovery is Love. What works, Lonergan says, is a healing, a recovery. That is, the saving factors involve some liberation from our biases. He names three.

(1) Some values result not from logical analysis of pros and cons; they result from being in love. Being in love knocks down the barriers to insight put up by fear. In other words, there is an affective element by which friends of the neurotic and egoist, in particular, draw them out of their self-concern. They begin to allow their intelligence to consider solutions best for everyone.

However, the more basic, though more recondite, experience of being in love is an experience a transcendent love. It's the experience of receiving a love of the better. It involves the discovery that we are recipients of the power to care before we every give our care to others. Those who recognize a giver in this gift worship the giver. In their perspective, the meaning of "worthwhile" or "better" or "truly valuable" is identical to "What our loving God moves us to choose by a gift of love for the better."

(2) We cling to some values even after our efforts are frustrated. Our hopes may be dashed, but we still hope. Human hopes do not depend on our intelligence or our theories or our logic. They work through our imagination and affectivity. It's aesthetics that represents to us the beauty of an order we long for.

We may define such hope as the desire rendered confident by transcendent love. Because we trust the gift of loving in us, because we trust the giver of such a love, we trust that, as Julianne of Norwich was fond of saying, "All shall be well, and every manner of thing shall be well."

(3) We don't get even. We often want to, but there is an impulse in us to stop the "Law of the Claw"—that you take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Any adolescent can see that this Law cannot be the foundation of a civil society, yet it is extremely difficult to withhold vengeance on those who harm you—second only to withholding vengeance on those who harm someone you love.

It is because of transcendent love that we not only see the value of turning the other cheek, but we act on it as well.

Lonergan is not "recommending" these factors. He is aiming to provoke an insight into the factors actually at work in how we improve life. This insight will occur more readily in those who have already grasped the duality of knowing in themselves, but the factors work nonetheless. The more such a person validates this in everyday life, the more intelligently he or she can cooperate with the elements of healing already present.

Human history, then, is driven ultimately by two operators. From "below upwards," there is a creative movement by which we get insights and carry them out. From "above downwards," there is a healing movement by which being in love—particularly being in transcendent love—heals the biases to which all creativity is vulnerable.¹⁶

Right and Duties

Two categories in particular deserve special attention. Lonergan doesn't address these directly, but I would like to alert readers to the fact that generalized empirical method gives grounding to the traditional terms, *rights* and *duties*. I will follow Lonergan's lead in taking a properly theoretical perspective by asking how rights and duties are related and how, together, they are related to the data of our consciousness. My aim is simply to understand these relationships, not propose what specific rights and duties we may have.

We saw that our original duty is to follow the built-in norms of consciousness. That is, we experience a primeval set of "oughts" in the impulses to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, plus

¹⁶ See "Healing and Creating in History," *A Third Collection*, pp 100-109

the overriding "ought" to maintain consistency between what we know and how we act. Lonergan defines "authenticity" as obedience to these precepts by which we transcend ourselves. So the elemental meaning of *duty* is found in the obligations issuing from the norms of our own authenticity.

Very little of what we know and appreciate results from our independent judgments. We are social beings. We rely on each other for our knowledge and values. So, besides the elemental norms of individual consciousness, we experience a corresponding expectation that others will obey the elemental norms of their consciousness. A *right*, then, is an expectation of authenticity. Essentially, I expect it of myself, but no less importantly, I expect it of others. At this elemental level, we can say that my "rights" are about our "duties." I have a duty to myself, and you have a duty toward yourself. As each of us carries out the duties of authenticity, we both know and value such duties in each other. So your "duty" to respect my "rights," is, at its core, your duty to yourself.

A right is an expectation. As formulated, it is abstract and general. But operationally a right is concrete and specific. Legislative bodies do not grant rights. They cannot formulate all the rights we may have. At best they protect the exercise of our expectations of authenticity by formulating the things that are sanctioned by some social rewards or punishments.

So it would be inaccurate to say that the Iraqi have no right to free speech. The reality is that Iraqi citizens cannot expect each other's authenticity to show up in free speech.

Also, it would be self-contradictory to say that I have a right to do wrong. While I can expect myself to act unauthentically on occasion, I cannot turn this expectation into a validation. I have no authentic claim to act against my authenticity. Nor can I expect others to step aside while I do wrong, as if rights were nothing but the absence of obstacles.

By the same token, one's duties follow more essentially from within than from without. Indeed, our consciences issue far more recommendations and prohibitions than parents, police, and public policy ever could. It is this inner duty that enables us to break from a minor authenticity that obeys the written rule to a major authenticity that may condemn the written rule.

I'd like to contrast this view with ethical theories that call themselves "deontological"—duty based. Most of them seek some general statement of duty from which particular acts may be deduced. "Treat

others as you want to be treated." "Act as though your actions were the norm for everyone's actions." Lonergan's "deontology" differs from these in two respects:

The fundamental "duty" is an experienced demand to be conscious in a self-transcending way. That demand is the origin of any maxim that represents general duties.

The transition from experiencing this inner demand to making a value judgment in a particular situation is not a matter of deduction, but rather of induction. As such, it cannot give certitude, only conviction.

Most discussions about rights stall when someone says that no rights are absolute; they're all restricted by the rights of others. This view relies on the liberal imagination—as well as the supporting conceptualist philosophies—that sees rights as properties inherent in individuals. In contrast, generalized empirical method grounds such terms as "rights" and "duties" in a personal experiment. It requires continuous personal effort to remain in the intellectual pattern of experience—that pattern that seeks explanations, not pictures. To reach genuine explanation, it looks to correlations among these grounded terms. It will require that the meaning of "conscience" be incorporated within an integral model of the self-transcending subject. And its supporting philosophies will cultivate an awareness of the transcendental precepts as the concrete basis for a society that claims to honor human rights.

For example, consider the question, "Does society have a right to kill someone?" Proponents of capital punishment say Yes and opponents say No. But let us rephrase the question under the critical realist's image: "Do the demands of being authentic persons require that we put this person to death?" The answer could be Yes, I suppose, in self-defense, for example. But putting the question this way brings our own authenticity into the picture. The danger of a total prohibition such as "It's never authentic for a society to kill," even if true, is that it reads like an abstraction falling into the "bad" category. As such, it can prevent people from realizing that authenticity is the issue, not blind adherence to prohibitions.

We easily imagine rights as belonging to a person. We picture a person of a certain age and of a certain gender. We include certain "rights" that also belong to this person.

To take a contemporary example, Catholic Christians ask whether women have a "right" to ordination. I think that asking

whether a "right" belongs to someone slants the kind of answer we'll get. A "right" doesn't exist "out there" like a property of things that can be verified. Nor is it an aspect of a person verifiable by measurements, like age or gender. A "right" belongs to the world mediated by acts of meaning, and the question of whether people have or don't have "rights" can't be answered by a simple judgment of fact: Yes, they do; No they don't.

A better way to pose the question of women's ordination, then, is to ask, What can authentic people expect authentic authorities to set as church policy? To answer this, we can't hope for a judgment of fact. We can hope only for a judgment of value, such as "Yes, it would be better for the Kingdom that women be ordained," or "No, it would be worse for the Kingdom that women be ordained."

We will reach this judgment of value collaboratively. It is a creation, not a discovery. It relies on taking responsibility, which is a far weightier burden than relying on logic alone to think the matter through. The process of that creation is dialectical, and for that, we will need to move to "dialectical method" in the next section.

The emergence of rights-consciousness over the last two centuries has been a great half-step forward. If the meaning of rights can be more explicitly connected to authenticity, rather than imagined as some property sprayed on people like cologne, then the meaning of individual, conscience-based duty may emerge and make this step of progress complete.

The Dialectical Method of Ethics

The strategy: Attract those who appreciate authenticity

Lonergan was preoccupied with understanding the differences between people and, based on that understanding, working out a way to work intelligently together toward making a genuinely better world.

People differ in their particular preferences, their shared customs, and their value-loaded language about what's worthwhile. People also formulate their values in moral standards, ideals, laws, and rules meant to shape their living and to educate their young. Such formulations tend to be negative or static—Thou Shalt Not Kill, Treat Others as You Want to Be Treated—because there are no formulas for creating new and improved ways of conducting our lives. When differences among values complement each other, we "celebrate

diversity" because it widens the pool of insights that make for better living. But when differences result from individuals living at various stages of moral and intellectual maturity, diversity should be addressed critically, not celebrated.

Radical Differences

Besides these complementary and developmental differences, and often hidden within them, there may lurk deeper and apparently irreconcilable differences. Lonergan counts eight such differences, each a unique combination of the presence or absence of three conversions.

When affective conversion is missing, a person's highest concern is this world and highest resources are reason and will power.

Life is just a given, not a gift from an absolutely transcendent being. One lives in an "I did it my way" world. One's affectivity is confined to narrow projects, self-protection, servile obedience, neurotic obsessions, and the avoidance of conflicts. Freedom means a liberty to do what you please, conditioned at best by laws that prevent you from blocking the freedom of others to do what they please.

When moral conversion is missing, a person sees no difference between what is personally satisfying and the truly valuable.

The better path is what is better for oneself, where 'better' means more comfort and less pain. Self-sacrifice for the common good is at best a tactic for maximizing one's satisfactions by capitalizing on the economies of group effort.

When intellectual conversion is missing, the person understands morality in one way and behaves in another.

A naive realist thinks the good is an obvious property of things. An idealist correctly understands that 'truly valuable' means something independent of personal interest, but pictures it as an invisible law governing civilization in the same manner that gravity governs physical matter.

A triply converted person may suggest to any of the other seven combinations a 'better' way to look at things. But this goes nowhere because the others already mean something quite different by 'better.' So Lonergan does not expect that argument and logic can precipitate a conversion. Instead, he puts his chips on 'encounter.'

Encounter is more than understanding, more than knowledge, more even than appreciating values. Encounter is a meeting between whole persons. We saw how the norms of consciousness urge each person toward being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and in love. At the same time each person's consciousness is endemically biased and never fully operating in a world whose horizon is defined by a fully transcendent love, transcendent best, transcendent reality. In an encounter, however, the norms of consciousness in each person can at least recognize persons or communities that are relatively free of bias and who live in a self-transcending manner. It is to that attraction to the converted horizon that Lonergan looks as the ultimate basis for resolving differences.

This sounds logical, and it is.

This sounds beautiful, and it is.

This doesn't sound difficult, but it is, and terribly so.

The difficulty lies in reaching a full mutual encounter. For my part, I must be humble enough to acknowledge my sources and how fully I have understood them. That acknowledgment must first be to myself. Concretely, this means being unafraid to admit my ignorance, despite my fear of appearing stupid. It means discovering in myself those beliefs I hold so dear that I spontaneously protect them from criticism—and then honestly opening them to criticism.

Equally difficult is moving behind the protective screens that others put up. The more experienced I become in uprooting bias and shortfall in conversion in myself, the better prepared I will be to address it in others. It takes great sensitivity and respect for another's commitments. It means learning to 'invite' the other person—and be invited -- to honestly explore alternatives. It means unlearning the combative techniques of debate, dodging rhetorical techniques when others use them, and learning a way of dialog where mutual encounter is the goal.

Lonergan once observed,

"It is quite true that the subject communicates not by saying what he knows but by showing what he is, and it is no less true that subjects are confronted with themselves more effectively by being confronted with others than by solitary introspection."¹⁷

This applies to anything I know, but the point to observe here is that it applies to how I know what my operative values really are. I may talk

¹⁷ *Collection* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1967), p 238.

a good game, but I grow in self-knowledge by listening to others telling me how I play on the field.

The Dialectic of Authorities

Earlier we considered the “messy” relationships between a community, as the essential bearer of authority, and its authorities—the men and women whose role is to direct its members. Both the community at large and its authorities have a mixture of authenticity and unauthenticity. The “mess” here is a dialectical reality. Authorities bend the members toward their moral horizon, or the members may do the same to their authorities. There is an unlimited number of possible ways these values and biases intertwine.

Although the notion of a dialectic helps us understand the kind of intelligibility that all concrete situations have, Lonergan doesn’t recommend trying to assess whether the power of a community or of its authorities is based on integrity:

Inquiry into the legitimacy of authority or authorities is complex, lengthy, tedious, and often inconclusive.¹⁸

Instead, he goes directly to his analysis of history as containing elements of progress, of decline, and of recovery. The point, after all, is not to diagnose the cause of every malady but to understand what will help the patient recover. For that, Lonergan offers an analysis of how faith, hope, and especially love dissolve biases, expose rationalizations, and drive hatred out the heart.

In the measure that the community becomes a community of love and so capable of making real and great sacrifices, in that measure it can wipe out the grievances and correct the objective absurdities that its unauthenticity has brought about.¹⁹

In other words, he invites us to get into the dialectic. Rather than stand back and analyze where power is legitimate and where it is not, we will be more immediately effective by exercising the love flooding in our hearts, seeing with that eye of love the true values in situations, and enduring the absurdities by letting love gird up our desires for the better. He invites us to become healing principles of the dialectics of authority, but to do so intelligently.

Before anyone realized the importance of understanding what human intentionality is, communities guided their moral development by the examples of virtuous men and women and by logical deductions from

¹⁸ *Collection*. p. 9

¹⁹ “The Dialectic of Authority,” *A Third Collection*, p. 10

conceptualized guidelines. Very little by way of intelligence was demanded of their members. Muslims go to Mecca because Mohammed did. Christians turn the other cheek because Christ did. Catholics hold the moral conclusions of popes as truths to put into practice, without wondering how such conclusions were reached. The payoff was a merit increase on God's account sheet.

But now, logic and emulation have been incorporated within the larger scope of a method based on an attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible loving. Now, when we think of imitating our saints, we want to imitate their intentionality, not just their actions. Now the point is to understand how turning the other cheek actually makes things better. Now the point is to understand how faith works to heal our biased creativity. Now we can understand how it is that rituals, music, art, poetry, dance, landscaping, architecture and the like sustain us in degrading situations, and we can *intelligently* create the symbols of hope that will be meaningful today. Now we can not only understand how love gives our faith and hope a foundation, but also take possession of an intelligible and workable criterion for telling when it's really love that moves us: if it's really love, then we will find ourselves more responsible, more reasonable, more intelligent, and more attentive. Now the payoff is the present joy of loving with God's love and a radical trust that God will not withdraw the gift, even, somehow, in death.

The Dialectic of "Principles"

To illustrate how we carry out the function of dialectic, let us look at how ethical thinkers rely on moral principles.

Both the fully and the partially converted may talk about their "principles." While they may differ in what these principles may be, they usually mean any set of conceptualized moral standards.

There has been a fair amount of debate about the role of principles, much of it rejecting an extreme position supposedly held by someone else.

Some reject principles for the demonstrable reason that principles are only abstract generalizations that do not apply in unforeseen situations. They cannot dictate practice. What counts is a thorough assessment of the concrete situation, which will result in an intuition of what seems best.

Others reject this kind of situation-based ethics for the demonstrable reason that people have different intuitions about what seems best in particular situations. What's needed is a

general rule that everyone agrees on, followed by an application of that rule.

What kind of "principles" are we talking about? Here are some examples:

"The punishment should fit the crime."

"No crime is worse than to kill the innocent."

"Rehabilitation of the guilty benefits society more than punishment."

"First, do no harm."

As we noticed above, these "principles" are not really principles in the sense of *starting points*. That is, they are not the *source* of normative demands in the philosopher. They are a *result*. The actual "principles" are the self-transcending operations of the subject.

Moreover, it's true that they're all general, abstract statements. When we try to apply them, there's bound to be dispute about what is meant by their terms -- "crime" or "the innocent" or "society" or "harm." Particular cases always require further value judgments on the relative importance of mitigating factors, and general statements seldom include these. The reason general statements cannot totally determine specific duties is that the better that we seek doesn't exist until we bring it about. It is a concrete, creative achievement, not some idealist abstraction awaiting realization.

Still, general principles are good things. We teach these generalizations to our children and refer to them in our debates. We codify them in our laws to support a social order. They represent wisdom gained by others in direct encounter with threats to their well being. To neglect them is to unknowingly expose oneself to the same threats. Experience may be the best teacher, but the wise learn from the mistakes of others. Indeed, for children in particular, and for adults whose moral intelligence has not matured, principles are firm anchors in a stormy sea.

Lonergan's approach is first to get the heuristics: When we wonder about the role of principles in ethics, what kind of problem are we dealing with here? What is the shape of the answer?

The kind of problem is one of process, not content. That is, we are wondering about how any "principle" fits into the process by which people make decisions.

The shape of the answer will not be a deduction, as if "principles" must be deduced themselves or be a conclusion

upon which to base deductions about concrete cases. Rather, the shape will be inductive, with the spiraling character of a self-correcting process of learning

To be specific, by "spiraling" and "inductive," I mean those features we have already seen. Principles are the products of minds exposed to a dialectic of opinions and that take a stand based on personal commitments within intellectual, moral and affective horizons. Their unfolding involves methodological issues all along the line. It begins with clarity of expression, based on explanatory categories. It expands through understanding the relationships these principles have with other principles. It becomes effective thorough adaptations that take into account the current worldview of a community, the media used, and the values implicit to the community's language. Lonergan addresses these methodological issues in his discussion of foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications in *Method in Theology*.

The question is how this view enters the dialog proper to dialectic.

We know that principles are products of minds and that minds have horizons. These horizons may complement each other, they may develop from earlier stages, or they may be dialectically opposed. People who espouse the same principles may mean something diametrically opposed by them. Or they may espouse the principle but act otherwise when hit with the unexpected.

To keep this illustration simple, let us take the case where the parties are *not* dialectically opposed regarding morality. I'm thinking of people who already operate on the assumption that there's a difference between the merely satisfying and the truly valuable.

Also, as Lonergan himself once observed, moral conversion is typically the fruit of a religious conversion. I presume that this holds even under the somewhat wider range connoted by "affective" conversion, where individuals are in fact in love with an absolutely transcendent but may not have developed to the point of making it explicit in the more recognizable "religious" conversion. So let us narrow our illustration further by assuming that the parties are affectively converted.

Of Lonergan's eight combinations of conversions, this leaves only two with radically different horizons—the triply converted and those lacking only intellectual conversion. The absence of intellectual conversion very often shows in a conceptualism about principles. Most adults have some awareness that the real world involves meanings and values. They blend a lot of common sense with a little theory, add a dash of religious transcendence, and dish up their proposal. But very few have

grappled with issues in cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics, and method. As a result, they adhere to moral concepts, definitions, and manifestos with a bravado untempered by reflections on how the mind and heart worked to produce them.

At the same time, among both the triply converted and those lacking only intellectual conversion, we can expect to find developmental differences regarding morality. That is, the morally converted may be found all along a scale of personal moral development, from a reward-punishment model, up through various reason-based, or utilitarian models, to a critical realist model as outlined by Lonergan. So we can refine our illustration further: How to dialog about principles among people at different stages of moral development, with and without intellectual conversion? In other words, what should we aim for in encounters with people with a conceptualist adherence to principles and only a partial mastery of theoretical issues?

Lonergan's approach is to invite them to an intellectual conversion that can promote them to a higher level of moral development, as well as giving them the further intellectual grounds for a thorough mastery. That invitation should be toward a realization of what principles really are. The best outcome would be if the moral conceptualist realized the following:

- Rules are made by people trying to make sense of their experience.
- New experiences, often resulting from new technologies, economies, or social structures, require new rules or refinement of old ones.
- A religious revelation is not a delivery from the sky of inscribed stones or lettering on papyrus. Nor is it dictation heard from unseen voices. Rather, revelation is a judgment of value regarding known proposals or known persons. And it is a judgment prompted by God's love in human hearts seeking the best.
- These and similar observations demand the work of noticing in oneself what happens in a value judgment, along with its retinue of associations with other cognitive and affective operations.
- The term "principles" works against a thorough understanding of ethics. In its place, terms such as "guidelines" and "standards" and "lessons" may help conceptualists and underdeveloped critical realists understand the status of value propositions.

In the discussion, we can count on the fact that most people concerned about ethics have already noticed normative elements in

their consciousness but lacked the insights and language to make them intelligible parts of how they present their views. By laying open our own horizons, particularly the horizon of philosophic interiority, they will feel they have encountered a whole person, not just a debater, a prosecutor, a rhetorician, a sloganeer, or hawker of exciting ideas. The most convincing way we lay ourselves open is by dealing with a concrete ethical issue. The more intelligently we recognize the specialized groupings of our own operations, the more likely we'll conceptualize our opinion in convincing ways.

The Dialectic of Narratives

Formulated ethical standards ("principles") express values in abstract, conceptual terms. We turn them into maxims in order to remind us of the moral lessons learned by those who went before us. We quote them to each other when we are making decisions together. It is common wisdom that people of different cultures uphold different standards, so we have ecumenical dialogs to look for commonalities. We soon discover that even when we reach agreement on how these commonalities may be formulated, there is a wide variation in how different cultures put them into practice. This difference appears not only between teenagers and their parents, but, far more seriously, between the cultures of North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Far East, as well as between transnational religious cultures like Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Generally, we find the more dominant expression of national and ethnic ideals not in conceptual standards but in descriptive narratives—the legends and histories that shape their particular sense of membership. It is in narratives, for example, that we discover what a community really thinks about the worth and role of women, or whether vengeance is a matter of pride or shame.

If there is to be genuine progress among people of different cultures, there must be cooperation. But cooperation requires the mutual encounter Lonergan holds is the essence of dialectic. So it will be worth our effort to look more closely at how narratives help or hinder the encounters needed for mutual understanding, respect, and the achievement of common purposes.

Lonergan distinguishes four kinds of narratives:

- Legends

- Precritical history

- Critical history

- Evaluative history

He prioritizes these narratives as successive differentiations culminating in the emergence of evaluative history.

"Critical history was a leap forward from precritical history. Precritical history was a leap forward from stories and legends."²⁰

Critical history, in turn, is incomplete without evaluation:

"*Completion* adds evaluative interpretation and evaluative history; it picks out the one hundred and one 'good things' and their opposites; it is history in the style of Burckhardt rather than Ranke."²¹

The dialectic of narratives, then, involves developmental differences across these four kinds of narratives.

Children and many uneducated adults live in a world of legends without serious concern about whether the protagonists and antagonists really existed. Only when the question of historical fact occurs to them do they distinguish history from legend.

However, that history is typically precritical. It promotes an appreciation of one's heritage. It proselytizes. It hopes to shape social policy without serious concern about whether the narrative assembles factual evidence in a manner that explains actual developments in the past. Only when this question of historical explanation occurs to them, do they distinguish critical history from precritical history.

Critical history aims to establish what actually was going forward over time, whether in a widening or a narrowing of political influence, of scientific achievements, of economic stability, and of aesthetic forms. Lonergan is careful to distinguish this cognitive task from the moral task of evaluating these developments. "Unless this work is done in detachment, quite apart from political or apologetic aims, it is attempting to serve two masters and usually suffers the evangelical consequences."²² Only when a rounded account of a historical trend is established is it appropriate to make the assessments of an evaluative history.

Evaluative history adds nothing about what was going forward in a community. It proposes no new facts and no new explanations

²⁰ *Method in Theology*, p. 187

²¹ *Method in Theology*, p. 250

²² *Method in Theology*, p. 185

about causes and results. What it adds is a moral assessment of what went on. It is important to keep in mind that Lonergan is not talking immediately about the books they produce but the evaluations they make about the events presented by critical history. Their work

"...moves beyond the realm of ordinary empirical science. It meets persons. It acknowledges the values they represent. It deprecates their shortcomings. It scrutinizes their intellectual, moral, and religious assumptions. It picks out significant figures, compares their basic views, and discerns processes of development and aberration. As the investigation expands, there are brought to light origins and turning points, the flowering and the decadence of religious philosophy, ethics, and spirituality.

Here is where the evaluative historian may discern not only different stages in a healthy development, not only the crippling effects of bias within an otherwise positive development, but, far more seriously, the radical differences owing to the absence of conversion. It is Lonergan's belief that those who have achieved the triple conversion can understand the differences resulting from slow development, bias, and absent conversion, while those who live within these more narrow horizons will misunderstand these differences, *even though they experience them*. However, he also believes that mutual encounter will heighten the odds of overcoming these differences. I'd like to paraphrase here²³ what he says about the value of encounter:

Our strategy will be,

not to prove our own position,
not to refute counter-positions,
but to exhibit diversity and to point to the evidence for its roots.

In this manner we will

attract those that appreciate full human authenticity,
and convince those that attain it.

Indeed, the basic idea of the method I am trying to develop takes its stand on discovering what human authenticity is and showing how to appeal to it.

It is not an infallible method,
for we easily are unauthentic.

²³ *Method in Theology*. p. 254.

But it is a powerful method,
for our deepest need
and most prized achievement is authenticity.

The dialectic of narratives, then, boils down to the dialectic of meeting others where they live, getting familiar with the sense they call common, envisioning their visions, dreaming their dreams, feeling their pain and antipathies. While not all the minds that meet will have made the leaps forward to the more developed types of narrative, all minds are housed in hearts seeking authenticity. This, Lonergan proposes, is what actually works when differences are surmounted and progress achieved.

The Dialectic of Inspirations

In our discussion of the genetic patterns of development in persons or communities, we noted the powerful role played by symbols. Symbols, considered as the linking of an image with an affect in consciousness, perform an integrator function. That is, they consolidate the gains we made by our value judgments. They make it easy for us to react to our perceptions of what is worse or better.

We also noted that the operator in moral development is a function of our intelligence and, unfortunately, that our intelligence is biased. So now our sensorium of symbolic representations of worse and better is riddled with blind spots. Because of bias, the actual patterns of development in persons or communities are dialectical in nature.

We're dealing here with the very familiar problem of how to discern which of several inspirations we might follow.

By inspirations, I do not mean just any insight. I mean the ideas that strike us with the power of image and feeling.

This has an important bearing on how we carry out the functional specialty, dialectic, because when we actually encounter others, we are flooded with inspirations about what to say or not say, when to play the card and when to hold. And no inspiration is exempt from the possibility of bias. Some inspirations would lead us to overstate our accomplishments or drop names in order to impress someone else. Other inspirations would tell us to shut up and listen, or to express our ignorance, or to express admiration at another's insight. The task overlays all our actual efforts to work out differences with people. It amounts to listening to the pulls in consciousness, weighing their merits and validity, and acting in as discerning a manner as possible.

Underneath the myriad instances of dealing with our inspirations we find the same operators and integrators.

Because symbols perform an integrator function, they resist any change in our moral horizon.

Because insights perform an operator function, they have the power to change our moral horizon. But, because insights may be biased, the operator function is half-hearted, changing our moral horizon for the worse.

Because conversion heals bias, it heals the operator function of insight. It both liberates insight to drive genuine moral development and heals our symbols of better and worse to perform their integrator function for the better.

St. Ignatius of Loyola saw this from an astutely practical vantage. In his "rules for understanding movements," and his "rules for scruples," he advised spiritual mentors that in people going from better to worse, their feelings only consolidate their position. It is when the voice of reason stings them that they wake up to their real responsibilities. In their case, they need the disturbance of insight to break the hold that immoral symbols have on their psyches. The content of the inspiration is more important here than the quality of inspiration.

With people going from good to better, the dynamic is just the opposite. Their symbols of better and worse are healed, so they do well to listen for what is in harmony with their consciousness. They run into trouble when insight doesn't provide a clear priority among basically good options. Here, any of the four biases can prevent them from following inspirations born of transcendent love: They let some phobia grip them; they start worrying about their motives; they feel constrained by the mores of their community; or they doubt whether they are prepared to carry through on an inspiration. All kinds of specious reasoning, petty justifications, and overly idealistic urges can trap them. In these cases, the content of an inspiration is less important than the quality of the experience.

So we need to refine our understanding of what makes value judgments "objective." We noted that the objectivity of a value judgment is based on the easy conscience. That is, the more effectively we address relevant questions—both about understanding a situation and about the relative values at work—the more likely we will see the better path to follow. However, the task of noticing what makes a conscience 'easy' requires an assessment of whether or not the conscience in question is converted. The maxim, "If it feels good, do it," works only for the converted, and only in situations where insight doesn't give clear indications of which option is better. A better maxim for the converted would be, "The heart has reasons unknown to

reason." A good maxim for the unconverted might be, "If you gain the whole world, but lose your soul, what have you gained?"

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6. *Education in Ethics*

What do we present to newcomers?

We have reviewed some of the main features of a method in ethics based on what Lonergan refers to as a generalized empirical method. It should be overwhelmingly obvious that the science of ethics is no easy matter. So there will always be a problem of how dialog can take place between people with little more than strong moral opinions and people who understand what it means to have a moral opinion in the first place. Conversations among ethical experts will always be strained. Some participants will be clueless about questions of method. Some will use the simple method of shouting. Others will just walk out. We can only hope that those who have reached the point of an existential ethics as described by Lonergan will have the grace and tact to listen to and respect others. They will invite others to take the human heart more seriously, and not without discernment of inspirations.

In the meantime, we have to educate newcomers. This will involve strategically leading children and youngsters through the stages of moral development, respecting the criteria they use as appropriate to their age, but keeping alive the operator questions that will move their development along.

In any case, I don't believe that high school is too early to help students recognize that rules have dates; that somebody wrote them; and that they wrote them to protect something precious against some real danger.

As youngsters move into adulthood, they will make rules for their clubs and their families. They will voice their opinions on the rules meant to put the "civil" in a civilization. Many will take courses or read books that render them capable of understanding ethics, coming to discover in themselves the foundations of all ethics, and conceptualizing the intricacies of their moral consciousness in ways that fit them to explain their views clearly.

All along the line of moral development, while it is extremely important to keep an eye on method in ethics, with all the scholarly and academic work which that involves, it is even more important to convey how morality is a fruit of love, and is practically crippled without love. This means putting morality into a religious context—not a proselytizing, denominational context, but a context that takes seriously the ordinary experience that we receive the power to love from above. A person's idea of doing better fits readily into his or her

religious context as it unfolds from early symbolic notions of God through later cognitive notions, and eventually into interpersonal notions.

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