

# **Insight and Beyond**

Class 21, Part One: March 10th 2010

## **“Metaphysics as Science: Unity of the Universe”**

*(Insight, Chapter 16: “Metaphysics as Science”)*

### **Summary of Material**

Metaphysics as Science.

Overview of the Table of Contents of Chapter 16.

What are the contexts for this chapter?

Chapter 16 was written against a ‘manual’ tradition of scholastic metaphysics.

How the need for method in metaphysics arose out of medieval theology; namely, the problem of grace and freedom.

Discussion of the nature of that problem.

Freedom as a gift (*gratia*) from God: How can there be freedom if grace is the cause of our good actions?

Further distinctions and relations in Christology and Trinitarian Theology.

By Lonergan's time, that achievement in metaphysics had degenerated into an abstract manualist tradition.

Subsequent Contexts:

Lonergan's account of distinction, relation and unity (grounded in self-appropriation) contributes to a methodical derivation (previously lacking) of the definitions used in traditional metaphysics.

The manualist tradition was taught to Descartes and Heidegger, for example, and was the source of their criticisms.

The impact of modern science upon metaphysics after Aquinas.

The medieval distinction between the order of faith and the order of reason gave reason its autonomy while preserving the order of faith without usurping the order of faith.

Lonergan re-establishes the grounds for Aquinas' earlier metaphysics, while also bringing it into harmony with modern science.

As a result, has potential to address issues arising in the modern and post-modern critiques of metaphysics.

In order to make treatment of the chapter manageable, we will concentrate on selected key issues from the chapter: unity; intelligibility of being; method; metaphysics and science; real distinctions and real relations (different order than Lonergan's treatments).

The unity of the universe in terms of its actual unity, its formal unity, and its potential unity.

Proportionate being = the universe.

Actual unity = actual unfolding of emergent probability.

Formal unity = successive, irreducible levels of higher explanatory genera and their species (specific) conjugate forms – a formal unity that is grounded in the self-appropriation of the intelligible relations between successive higher viewpoints.

Potential unity grounded in multiplicity of merely given successions and conjunctions.

A closer look at the Potential Unity of the Universe:

The possibility and problem of intelligible relations set by the merely coincidental.

Not just empty coincidence, but coincidence full of potential.

Examples: a junk yard; atoms or bacteria or insects in the universe as multitudes with potential — potential in the sense of a problem seeking a solution to make something intelligible out of the coincidences.

The successive transpositions of the problem of the coincidental to higher levels — Example of planetary formations.

The realization of possible solutions — emergences of schemes of recurrence and emergence of developing sequences; i.e., intelligently self-transforming schemes of occurrence.

The solutions are unifications (schemes, developments, things) but are always limited in extent.

Example of stellar formation and explosion cycles.

The unity of the universe is *potential, formal* and *actual*; but the underlying potential unity is the potentiality of the merely coincidental as the fertile ground for the emergence of something more systematic, more organized, and more developmental.

Student question about term ‘adjustable’.

— Discussion of how combinations of conjugate forms at higher genera are capable of more complex combination that can operate under a wider range of conditions than at lower level genera; for example, there is a greater range of operation of schemes as one moves from atomic to chemical to living forms.

Potential Unity and Finality.

Potency is known by the intellectually patterned experience of empirical residue.

Intellectually patterned experience has a dynamic orientation —  
because it is caught up in the throe of unrestricted inquiry.

The dynamic orientation has its counterpart in proportionate being  
= reality of finality.

— Examples: how we can be overwhelmed and feel awe at  
the immensity or diversity of particulars; i.e., crowds  
of people, the vastness of space, the number of  
beetles, the duration of history, grains of dust.

Such is our experience of the intellectual patterning of the merely  
empirical residue, of merely empirical differences.

An experience of coincidence as more than coincidence —  
empirical residue as problem and potential.

The empirical residue poses a problem for us insofar as we seek to  
explain it.

The actual unity of the universe is the universe working out an  
answer to that problem.

Student question about use of statistics to discern difference of coincidence from pattern.

- Discussion of the normativity of probability as an intelligible ordering, and how this differs from the ordering of events into systems and into developing systems.

Student question about how finality applies to a particular thing, for instance a rose; does the particular thing have a finality.

- Finality applied to specific natural entities is distinct from how it applies to human beings or to the whole universe; but the rose has a limited developmental finality, and also plays a part in the finality of the universe.

The non-countable differences in empirical residue and how it relates to the continuity of space and time.

The displacement of the merely coincidental to ever higher generic levels.

“The merely coincidental becomes space-time...” The way the universe is structured depends on how energy and momentum are arrayed in space and time (*CWL* 3, pp. 533-534), i.e., how they are merely empirically given.

How this random residual givenness is displaced to the level of physical, then to the level of chemical; then these are further organized into organic coincidental arrays, and finally raised to the psychic level.

This account of unity of the proportionate universe doesn't actually specify the actual or formal unity of the universe, but the potential unity of it.

Finality is exactly this process of the universe working out what its unity is.

One might say that the universe is simply not yet united; but we are witnessing the emergence of such a unity.

Student question, struggling to understand how the higher levels of integration are not just organizations of the same, basic reality of physical primordial stuff, matter, prime potency, rather than talking about being itself.

- Discussion of potency with respect to a higher explanatory genus.
- How the conjugate acts at the lower level become the potencies for the next level up.

— Example of how energetic electrons eventually become biologically useful. How the same electron is a conjugate act for physics and a conjugate potency for biology. In other words, the electronic event is the condition of possibility of a living system.

The Unity of the Human.

Lonergan's treatment of the unity of the universe seems indirect in comparison to his treatment of the unity of the human.

The unity of the universe is primarily treated heuristically, from the viewpoint of its potential unity.

By contrast, Lonergan forcefully declares: "Man *is* one!"

**End of Part One.**

# Insight and Beyond

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## “Metaphysics as Science: Unity of the Universe”

(*Insight*, Chapter 16: “*Metaphysics as Science*”)

Class 21, March 10, 2010

Chapter 16: “*Metaphysics as Science*”

Metaphysics as Science.

Overview of the Table of Contents of Chapter 16.

What are the contexts for this chapter?

Chapter sixteen was written against a ‘manual’  
tradition of scholastic metaphysics.

So, welcome back after your break to our class on *Insight and Beyond*; and today we’re going to look at chapter sixteen, which is entitled “*Metaphysics as Science*” (CWL 3, pp. 512-552). ... So let’s look a little bit at the Table of Contents for this chapter.

*The things that Lonergan talks about: he begins with a discussion of distinctions, real distinctions, of relations, real relations; and then a long discussion about the nature and significance of the metaphysical elements as potency, form, and act. He includes central potency, central form and central act, and also conjugate potency conjugate form, and conjugate act. And then there’s a long discussion about unity; the unity of proportionate being focusing on the unity of the universe, of a particular proportionate being and then the unity of man. I’ve left the gender insensitive terminology, for reasons that I will explain a little bit later on. And then finally he has an account of what he understands by the metaphysics of science.*

## **Insight: A Study of Human Understanding**

### Chapter 16: “Metaphysics as Science”

#### Chapter Contents

How the need for method in metaphysics arose out of medieval theology; namely, the problem of grace and freedom.

Discussion of the nature of that problem.

Freedom as a gift (*gratia*) from God: How can there be freedom if grace is the cause of our good actions?

Further distinctions and relations in Christology and Trinitarian Theology.

By Lonergan’s time, that achievement in metaphysics had degenerated into an abstract manualist tradition.

You folks have read this chapter. It’s a very difficult chapter. If chapter fifteen, “**Elements of Metaphysics**” (*CWL* 3, pp. 456-511) is my favourite chapter in the book, chapter sixteen, “**Metaphysics as Science**” (*CWL* 3, pp. 512-552) is the one that I have the hardest time figuring out what to do with. And I thought that a way of getting us into this chapter would be by way of talking about what the contexts of this chapter are.

## **Context of Manuals of Metaphysics**

**“the foregoing issues commonly are treated in manuals of metaphysics ...**

**If the method is both valid and powerful, the treatise will follow in due course ... not as a conclusion deduced by an electronic computer, but as a product of intelligence and reasonableness.” (CWL 3, pp. 512-513).**

Arguably, chapter sixteen, “**Metaphysics as Science**” (CWL 3, pp. 512-552) is the one chapter where the context is not *Insight* itself. In some senses, of course it is, but there are some wider contexts. And they show up in the very beginning of chapter sixteen, when Lonergan tells us that the topics that we just saw a moment ago, *distinctions, relations, unity, reality*, that the topics that are the topics of this chapter are usually treated in manuals of metaphysics. “**The foregoing issues commonly are treated in manuals of metaphysics.**” (CWL 3, p. 512) And then he goes on to say that if his method of metaphysics “**is both valid and powerful**” as he obviously thinks it is, that a treatise or a manual of metaphysics

**“will follow in due course ... not as a conclusion deduced by an electronic computer, but as a product of intelligence and reasonableness.” (CWL 3, pp. 512-513).**

Now he seems to have something in mind. Lonergan once made a comment — Somebody asked him “What were the most important parts of your education?” And he said: “Three things!” And the first one was the strength of the education in mathematics that he got. And the second one was that he was taught languages. And he went on to say, and that meant he didn’t have to rely on anyone else’s translations. And the third thing he said was that the year that his class was supposed to have their class on metaphysics, his teacher was called to an administrative responsibility, and the class only met one time!

And he said that he didn’t have to *unlearn metaphysics!*

[Students amusement]

He is referring to a tradition of instruction in the Society of Jesus at the time that he was a young man, where metaphysics was taught by way of manuals. And I didn't really know what this meant. I was not brought up in that context, although it wasn't very much before my time as a student at this Jesuit University, Boston College, when that is in fact how metaphysics was taught. People who were seniors when I was a freshman had taken eight courses in philosophy! Everybody who graduated from Boston College that year, and for many years before that, took eight courses in philosophy! We'd like to think everybody was a philosophy major because it's such a great department; but in those days everybody in fact was a philosophy major, because everybody had to take so much philosophy. And it went: minor logic, major logic, epistemology; and then there was another course, and then there was metaphysics! And then there was ethics, there was special ethics, and general ethics, and cosmology. Those were the — I think I left out one course. But those were the main courses that were taught in the eight semesters of philosophy that students took.

And the metaphysics was taught in a manner with tradition! And since I wasn't educated in that, I was asking Professor Fred Lawrence about it, and he said: You just got a manual and you started out with the definitions that we saw, a major real distinction, a minor real distinction, an adequate real distinction, a minor notional distinction; and they were just spelled out in different definitions in a way that actually makes Lonergan's chapter look pretty concrete!

[Some student laughter]

Why was that part of the education and the formation in Jesuit education? It was because there was a theological context for metaphysics, which Lonergan refers to towards the end of chapter sixteen. **“The demand for method in metaphysics rose out of medieval theology.”** (*CWL* 3, p. 550). Now, he says this because this was actually the topic of his doctoral dissertation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).



## Theological Context

**“The demand for method in metaphysics rose out of medieval theology. The twelfth century was oppressed with an apparently insoluble problem: with the necessity of distinguishing between divine grace and human freedom, and at the same time an inability to conceive either term without implying the other.” (CWL 3, p. 550).**

**Further distinctions and relations in Christology and Trinitarian Theology**

The problem that was confronted in the twelfth century — but indeed, earlier than the twelfth century, arguably from the time of Augustine (354-430) to the time of Hugh of St Victor (1096-1141) — was the problem of making a distinction between divine grace and human freedom, and at the same time to conceive either of them without implying the other.

**“The twelfth century was oppressed with an apparently insoluble problem: with the necessity of distinguishing between divine grace and human freedom, and at the same time an inability to conceive either term without implying the other.” (CWL 3, p. 550).**

Now stop for a moment. Let’s think about this for a moment. If you haven’t gotten to the point of the end of the twelfth century and particularly to the high point, as Lonergan saw it, in this complex intellectual movement lasting many, many, centuries, the high point that arrives [in the thirteenth century](#) with the work of Thomas Aquinas, why — just upon the face

of it — why do you think that there might be a problem of reconciling human freedom and divine grace? ... Donato?

Donato: Because if grace is what allows humans to do the good, then when they fail it's because of the supposed lack of grace? And so in one sense then, it wasn't freedom there that once supplied the necessary means to doing the good; and then when they do choose it, that's grace pushing them from behind, so there isn't really freedom of choice.

Pat: Okay. That's one of the issues. If grace is acting, then there's not really freedom. That's one of the issues. There's another issue as well. ... Tim?

Tim: Would it just be — I guess the opposite: if people do bad things then there's no grace operating in human freedom. Like, if people do bad things, then they're not receiving God's grace, that type of thing.

Pat: Ahm, yeah. But look at the phrase that he says:

**“the necessity of distinguishing between divine grace and human freedom, and at the same time an inability to conceive either term without implying the other.”**  
(*CWL* 3, p. 550).

Okay. So what's the difficulty of conceiving of freedom in grace without one implying the other? ... Maggie

Maggie: Oh, I guess in order to have the — Oh, I can't remember how to say what I want to say. May I come back to it?

Pat: Okay. ... Deb?

Deb: Does it have to do with eternity? And the claim that you can't be good

—

Pat: — Actually, we're going to come to that in a minute. That's another part of the issue. But this is just grace and freedom. Greg?

Greg: It seems there would be a sense in which you couldn't do philosophy without doing theology. In other words, could you give a comprehensive and philosophical account of human freedom without also accounting for grace, in a sense?

Pat: Ahm, that's actually right; because what he's saying here is there's — what we'll see is there's a differentiation that's going to take place here. It's a differentiation

between philosophy and theology. Somebody asked me about that a couple of weeks ago, and I gave *an* answer at that time. ... Ah, Maggie?

Maggie: Our knowledge of freedom only comes from having a concept of grace? So —

Pat: — And why would that be? That's part of it, yeah.

Maggie: Because if we're acting, the way in which we're acting supposes — if there's a right and a wrong to our action, it supposes some higher conception of what is right acting, and that comes from grace. So I guess the freedom to understand that as a choice, the choice becomes good or bad by way of a standard of grace, or God.

Pat: Okay. Very good!

### Subsequent Contexts:

Lonergan's account of distinction, relation and unity (grounded in self-appropriation) contributes to a methodical derivation (previously lacking) of the definitions used in traditional metaphysics.

The manualist tradition was taught to Descartes and Heidegger, for example, and was the source of their criticisms.

The impact of modern science upon metaphysics after Aquinas.

The medieval distinction between the order of faith and the order of reason gave reason its autonomy while preserving the order of faith without usurping the order of faith.

Lonergan re-establishes the grounds for Aquinas' earlier metaphysics, while also bringing it into harmony with modern science.

As a result, has potential to address issues arising in the modern and post-modern critiques of metaphysics.

### Subsequent Contexts

**“a distinction between reason and faith is a distinction within theology ... But it possesses implications outside the theological domain ...**

**For once reason is acknowledged to be distinct from faith, there is issued an invitation to reason to grow in consciousness of its native power, to claim its proper field of inquiry, to work out its departments of investigation, to determine its own methods, to operate on the basis of its own principles and precepts.”**

(CWL 3, p. 551).

Okay. Well, there's another context and it comes out of Saint Paul. *What do you have that you've not received as a gift?* I think that's *Corinthians, First Corinthians*. *What do you have that you do not receive as a gift?* And among all that we've received, perhaps among the things that we most — we cherish most highly is our freedom. And so freedom is a gift, is a grace. How do you distinguish between grace and some of the senses that people are saying, some of the problems that freedom, and its abuse, get into; how do you make those kinds of distinctions? So there are quite a number of conundrums and quandaries that developed in the context of how do you distinguish between gifts with a small g — grace, *gratia* is just Latin for gift — gifts with a small g and gift with a large g? And that was really the problem that the medievals struggled with. *Because everything is a gift from God. But in some sense, there is something special about certain gifts from God, and what were they, and how do they relate to freedom?* And then the things that other people have said, as to how —

that Donato said in particular — *How can there be freedom if the cause of our good acts is grace? And then what is the role of human freedom in that?*

So these are some of the difficulties; and Lonergan says that the necessity for metaphysics as something that had to be developed came out of this kind of discussion in Theology about the relationship between freedom and grace. And something that Deb was referring to, although it came a little bit later on — it came both earlier and later in a way — that early struggles within the Christian community — *Arguably throughout the first four centuries of the Christian community, the biggest struggles were over the reality and the distinctness, first and foremost, of the human and the divine in the person of Christ; and also the distinctions and relations among the persons in the Trinity; and the manner in which they could all be said to be God.* The experiences of Christianity forced upon the Christian community the need for intellectual development which led to metaphysics; and led to the sense of distinctions and the different ways of talking about distinctions and the different ways of talking about relations that we see reflected in what Lonergan is talking about.

So in the education that Lonergan had, and the education that most people going into theology had at the time Lonergan was beginning, and at the height of his career, was a manual that told you the sets of distinctions and relations that there were; so that when you got through metaphysics and you got through your study of philosophy and started your study of theology, you could understand the theology of freedom and grace, Incarnation, the Trinity, and similar things, the Church, and so on. So that's why he's referring to these manuals.

The difficulty from Lonergan's point of view is that they were just **providing** abstract given definitions; that these were just the definitions, just the way it is! Why is it this way? What does it mean? Never mind! Just memorize it! And just apply it on the basis of your memorization! That's what the reference to being generated by a computer is about.

What Lonergan thinks of himself as doing is giving a methodical derivation of these distinctions and relations and discussions about unity and reality that that were found in the manuals in preparation for doing systematic theology that wasn't provided by any other basis. So again his account of metaphysics, in particular the metaphysics of distinctions and relations and unity, as grounded in self-appropriation, he sees as supplying what he found lacking in his own education. And it's a context that was also, among other things, the context of Descartes's education, and was the context of Heidegger's education. They were

both educated in a context of Jesuit philosophical education. So Lonergan sees himself as doing something [about the clarification of problems](#) that had caused considerable difficulty in the history of philosophy; or for the lack of which had caused considerable difficulty in the history of philosophy.

So on the one hand, he's thinking of what he's doing in this chapter sixteen, "*Metaphysics as Science*" (CWL 3, pp. 512-552) as supplying a much needed rationale in grounding and explanation for categories that are needed in Christian theology. But on the other hand, he draws our attention to the fact that a lot of water has passed under the bridge since the time that, among other things, Thomas Aquinas developed this technical set of categories and ideas to approach theological issues.

One of the key things that he draws attention to is that the solution to the question about the distinction between grace and freedom required a distinction between faith and revelation<sup>2</sup> as well; *one of the things he traces in his dissertation is the way in which a notion of a distinct, two distinct orders of nature and supernature, the natural and the supernatural, then allowed for the distinction freedom and grace, reason and faith, and a number of other types of distinctions.* But, as he says, once you've made a distinction between the order of faith and the order of reason, that invites the opportunity for the proper autonomy of reason to begin to explore its domain, its possibilities, its categories, its fields.

### Subsequent Contexts

**“a distinction between reason and faith is a distinction within theology ... But it possesses implications outside the theological domain ...**

**For once reason is acknowledged to be distinct from faith, there is issued an invitation to reason to grow in consciousness of its native power, to claim its proper field of inquiry, to work out its departments of investigation, to**

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<sup>2</sup> Pat says “faith and revelation” at this point, but it seems probable to the transcriber that he intended rather to refer to the distinction between “faith and reason.”

**determine its own methods, to operate on the basis of its own principles and precepts.” (CWL 3, p. 551).**

Now this is different from what you might characterize as “the spirit of modernity,” which Eric Voegelin (1901-1985), among others, has characterized as the spirit of rebellion. Lonergan sees a proper autonomy but not an illumination of the supernatural order or the order of faith; but having gotten clear about what’s distinctly a matter of faith and what’s distinctly a matter of reason, that then opens up the possibility for a properly autonomous development of reason that doesn’t take over and usurp what properly belongs to the order of faith.

And as Lonergan explains, once that development takes place, once you get the blossoming of the modern sciences, and the distinct methods of the modern sciences, and the introduction of mathematical methods into the modern sciences, the way that Aquinas articulates these metaphysical distinctions and relations needs to be updated and grounded in a way that’s going to be adequate to the advances of human knowledge from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century. So that’s one of the things he sees himself doing: [he sees himself](#), on the one hand, as giving a grounding for what Aquinas achieved, which grounding had been lost over the centuries, and on the other hand, giving it a grounding that makes it possible to do the work of integrating and distinguishing the achievements of the modern sciences in relationship to issues having to do with metaphysics and theology, and so on.

But there’s another subsequent context — so if a further context of this chapter sixteen, “*Metaphysics as Science*” (CWL 3, pp. 512-552) is the development of the sciences and the development of human knowledge over the past nine centuries, another context is the context of the critiques of metaphysics, and as I mentioned two of the strongest critics of traditional metaphysics were — explicitly had in mind some of the things that were strongly in place in the Jesuit instruction of metaphysics.

## **Subsequent Contexts**

## Modern Critiques of Metaphysics

## Post-Modern Critiques of Metaphysics

So it seems to me that there are things in Lonergan's chapter sixteen "*Metaphysics as Science*" (*CWL* 3, pp. 512-552) that have relevance to both the modernist rejections and criticisms of metaphysics by the various forms that that takes, whether it be Descartes's or Spinoza's or Leibniz's or Locke's or Hume's or Berkeley's; but also the post-modern criticisms of metaphysics.

In order to make treatment of the chapter manageable, we will concentrate on selected key issues from the chapter: unity; intelligibility of being; method; metaphysics and science; real distinctions and real relations (different order than Lonergan's treatments).

That said, this chapter, to put it in its context and to go through all the details and discussions in this chapter — it seems to me would probably take the whole semester. To carefully work through all the things that are spelled out there, and understand them by understanding them in relationship to the manual context, and to the critiques that have happened since the reign of the manual context, would really require an awful lot of time. So, I'm not going to do that in this class, today. I think it would be a fascinating project to do as a class some day, but we're not going to do it in this class, or we'll never get to chapter twenty "*Special Transcendent Knowledge*" (*CWL* 3, pp. 709-751) if we do that.

### Highlights from Chapter Sixteen

- 1 Unity of the universe
- 2 Unity of the human
- 3 Intrinsic intelligibility of being
- 4 Lonergan's estimate of his method

- 5 Metaphysics and science**
- 6 Distinctions**
- 7 Relations**

So what I wanted to do instead was to touch upon some highlights from chapter sixteen, “*Metaphysics as Science*” (CWL 3, pp. 512-552). And the highlights that I would like to touch on are not in the same order that Lonergan sets them forth, partly because it seems to me that approaching them in this way is a little bit more continuous with where we left off in chapter fifteen “*Elements of Metaphysics*” (CWL 3, pp. 456-511). It’s a little more continuous with what I’ve been suggesting is the overall movement of the book *Insight*: why Lonergan began with the account of natural sciences in the way that he did; and hopefully will back us into seeing some of the relevance of his more technical accounts of metaphysical elements.

The unity of the universe in terms of its actual unity,  
its formal unity, and its potential unity.

Proportionate being = the universe.

Actual unity = actual unfolding of emergent  
probability.

Formal unity = successive, irreducible levels of  
higher explanatory genera and their species (specific)  
conjugate forms – a formal unity that is grounded in  
the self-appropriation of the intelligible relations  
between successive higher viewpoints.

Potential unity grounded in multiplicity of merely  
given successions and conjunctions.

So the highlights that I want to touch upon are his discussion of *the unity of the universe*, his discussion of *the unity of the human*, his claim about *the intrinsic intelligibility of being*, his own estimate of his own method, what he thinks it’s about, what he thinks its value and strength is, his remark about *the relationship between metaphysics and science*; and then, if we have time, to take a look at some of the parts of his sections *on distinctions and on relations*.

So when he comes to that section on *the unity of the universe, the unity of the universe of proportionate being*, he makes a very strong statement: *by proportionate being I mean the universe*. And approaching the question of the unity of the universe, he says:

**Its *actual unity* is an immanent intelligible order, which we have found reason to identify with a generalized emergent probability. Its *formal unity* is constituted by its successive levels of conjugate forms, which set up successive intelligible fields. (CWL 3, p. 533, emphases added).**

So what he means there is the higher genera. *And when he gives his thumbnail sketch of what he thinks the ontological order of genera are, it's the physical, the chemical, the biological, the psychic, and the human. So when he says "successive levels of conjugate forms," he has those five in mind.* Is it possible that there are generic orders in between those? Sure! It's not clear to me what they might be, but it's possible! *But those are the five that he has in mind, the explanatory genera.*

## **1 Unity of the Universe**

**"Its *actual unity* is an immanent intelligible order, which we have found reason to identify with a generalized emergent probability.**

**Its *formal unity* is constituted by its successive levels of conjugate forms, which set up successive intelligible fields.**

**Its *potential unity* is grounded in conjugate prime potency, in the merely empirical conjunctions and successions that constitute the inexhaustible manifold of the merely**

**coincidental that successive levels of forms and schemes bring under the intelligible control of system.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 533, emphases added).

So **“its formal unity is constituted by its successive levels of conjugate forms.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 533). ‘Successive’ is kind of a key word here; *‘successive’ meaning they actually have a kind of relationship to one another. It’s a relationship of higher viewpoint!* That what makes a level successive and higher is that it gives a regularity, an intelligible regularity, or it concerns a positive regularity, in patterns of recurring events that would not be possible solely on the basis of the previous intelligible ordering.

So that the laws of gravitation or that kind of magnetism don’t make intelligible everything, or don’t make intelligible the obvious regularity of everything; that when you add in the laws of chemistry, that regularity becomes intelligible. So you’ve got this kind of weird regularity without an adequate explanation until you bring in the laws of chemistry; and likewise, you’ve got a weird kind of regularity that goes on in our bodies, goes on in the bodies of plants, goes on the bodies of animals, that on the basis of chemistry alone, is inexplicable! It’s kind of a happy recurring accident.

But *precisely because the laws of chemistry are organizing what would be otherwise inexplicable physical occurrences into a pattern that isn’t explicable by physics alone, that gives you a higher viewpoint.* And that’s what he means by the successive — or so, *the formal unity of the universe is the successive relatedness of higher orders of intelligibility.* The formal unity of the universe **“is constituted by its successive levels of conjugate forms, which set up successive intelligible fields.** (*CWL 3*, p. 533).

And then

**“Its potential unity is grounded in conjugate prime potency, in the merely empirical conjunctions and successions that constitute the inexhaustible manifold of the merely coincidental that successive levels of**

**forms and schemes bring under the intelligible control of system.”** (*CWL* 3, p. 533).

So the potential unity of the universe is the multitude of diversity and difference, the multitude of multiplicity, that is characteristic of our universe. That is what he says is the potential unity.

A closer look at the Potential Unity of the Universe:  
The possibility and problem of intelligible relations set  
by the merely coincidental.

Not just empty coincidence, but coincidence full of  
potential.

Examples: a junk yard; atoms or bacteria or insects in  
the universe as multitudes with potential — potential  
in the sense of a problem seeking a solution to make  
something intelligible out of the coincidences.

The successive transpositions of the problem of the  
coincidental to higher levels — Example of planetary  
formations.

The realization of possible solutions — emergences of  
schemes of recurrence and emergence of developing  
sequences; i.e., intelligently self-transforming  
schemes of occurrence.

So let us take a look at these things in a little more detail. Towards the end of that section, a very short section; *the unity of the universe* lasts less than a page. This is a kind of remarkable thing when you stop to think about it.

[Student amusement]

And *the unity of a particular proportionate being* and *the unity of the human* take up many, many, more pages. But the unity of the universe gets a very short statement.

## 1 Unity of the Universe

**Its *potential unity* is grounded in conjugate prime potency, in the merely empirical conjunctions and successions that constitute the inexhaustible manifold of the merely coincidental that successive levels of forms and schemes bring under the intelligible control of system.”** (CWL 3, p. 533, emphases added).

**Its *potential unity* is grounded in conjugate prime potency, in the merely empirical conjunctions and successions ...** (CWL 3, p. 533, emphases added).

**“The merely empirical conjunctions and successions”** constitute the possibility and the problem of intelligible relations, **“the possibility and the problem of intelligible relations set by the coincidental.”** (CWL 3, p. 534). And remember ‘*coincidental*’ means: *events and things that just happen to be in the same place and the same time. They happen to share that companionship, that ‘coincidingness’.* That, Lonergan says, is not just empty coincidence. *It is more than empty coincidence. It is possibility! And it is problem!*

Remember back and look at how he — where he gets that. But if you just think of a junk-yard, a little junk yard, and just all of this stuff there. It’s all been thrown there for millions of different reasons, and *it’s just lying there in the junk-yard. That’s the merely coincidental!* *If you add — If you think of the multitude of atoms in the universe, the multitude of bacteria in the universe, the multitude of insects in the universe —* There was a movie a number of years ago — every fourth living thing is a beetle. I think that’s probably not true!

[Student amusement]

And it was a movie that was saying well, what’s likely to survive, whether we have a nuclear holocaust or we have a global warming, what’s likely to survive? Beetles are

incredibly adaptive. And so the idea was every fourth living thing is a beetle. Why are there so many beetles? *That's what he means by this coincidentalness, and it's setting a problem of intelligible relations.*

## **1 Unity of the Universe**

**The possibility and the problem of intelligible relations set by the coincidental,**

**The successive transpositions of the problem to higher levels, where it is met by ever more adjustable and more comprehensive modes of unification, and**

**The realization, in accord with successive schedules of probabilities, of the compound conditioned series of concretely possible solutions.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 534, emphasis added).

The solutions are unifications (schemes, developments, things) but are always limited in extent.

Example of stellar formation and explosion cycles.

The unity of the universe is *potential, formal* and *actual*; but the underlying potential unity is the potentiality of the merely coincidental as the fertile ground for the emergence of something more systematic, more organized, and more developmental.

And there's what he calls **“the successive transpositions of the problem”** (CWL 3, p. 534), the successive transpositions of the problem of there being coincidences, there being multiplicities which happen to all be in the same place and in the same time,

**“the successive transpositions of the problem”** of the coincidences **“to higher levels, where it's met by ever more adjustable and more comprehensive modes of unification.”** (CWL 3, p. 534).

So think of the very early stages of the universe, when there are only very, very, elementary particles, protons, mesons, neutrons, whizzing around in a big space where they all just happen to be there, and don't have any connectedness with one another. *What our astrophysics tells us is that gradually the forces of gravity enable those coincidences to coagulate and begin to operate in systems that were fusion systems that form the oldest protostars.* That's what he means by

**“the successive transpositions of the problem”** of the coincidental being **“met by ever more adjustable and more comprehensive modes of unification.”** (CWL 3, p. 534).

We'll see another version of this in a little more detail in a second. That's what he's getting at! But *underlying this is the sense that the coincidental isn't just coincidental; it's possibility and problem;* and that those ever more comprehensive modes of unification come in accord with successive schedules of probabilities of the conditioned series of possible solutions.

**“The successive transpositions of the problem to higher levels, where it is met by ever more adjustable and more comprehensive modes of unification, and the realization, in accord with successive schedules of probabilities, of the compound conditioned series of concretely possible solutions.”** (CWL 3, p. 534).

And, of course, what he means there is *schemes of recurrence*, but also now *developments*; schemes of recurrence, but intelligibly related, self-transforming schemes of

recurrence. That's what he means by the solutions, so the coincidental sets a problem that is met by a certain kind of unification. But unifications are always limited in extent.

The protostars — There isn't one big protostar that takes up the whole universe. There are trillions of protostars, and they have interactions with one another through gravitational forces. And when they go through their early stage of nova explosions, they spew out — and incidentals scattered randomly flying apart — heavier molecules, which whizz around for millions of years, and gradually, through the forces of gravity, come together and form planetary forms, which are largely aggregations of swirls of unassociated molecules, which gradually set the conditions for the possibility of the emergence of life-forms.

*So that's what he's getting at here. The unity of the universe is potential, formal, and actual! But the underlying thing here is the potentiality of the merely coincidental, that is always the fertility for the possibility of the emergence of something more organized, something more systematic, something more developmental.*

Student question about term 'adjustable'.

— Discussion of how combinations of conjugate forms at higher genera are capable of more complex combination that can operate under a wider range of conditions than at lower level genera; for example, there is a greater range of operation of schemes as one moves from atomic to chemical to living forms.

Pat: Jonathan?

Jonathan: Just a quick question. The word 'adjustable' there (*CWL* 3, p. 534). I'm a little unclear what that means in that context.

Pat: I think what he's — what he means by that is that the kinds of ways in which chemical laws can organize its potencies have a much wider range — There's more ways of organizing chemical beings than there are of organizing quarks and leptons. Quarks and leptons seem to have fairly limited number of elementary particles that they can combine to form. But once you combine those elementary forms into chemical units, the chemical

units have incredible plasticity to them. And likewise, life forms seem to have an even greater variability of how they can combine the chemical forms; so that there are more kinds of life-forms than there are of chemical forms, and more kinds of chemical forms than there are physical forms. “**More adjustable**” (CWL 3, p. 534) means that *life-forms can find more complicated kinds of environments to operate in; life-forms have more ability to operate under a wider range of conditions than chemical or physical entities do. Chemicals have a tendency to break down, unless they’re in a biological environment which includes things like repair.*

I heard a talk by a member of our Biology Department yesterday whose work is on the repair of proteins in aging life-systems. That’s what her research has been: how life-systems repair proteins when they break down. So they’re more adjustable. They can supply a lot — They can supply the conditions under which they actually — They can keep refurbishing the conditions under which they are operating. So I think that’s what he means by that! It’s kind of an odd thing because, as we know, earthly life forms once they get outside of the atmosphere don’t do too well!

[Student amusement]

So it seems like they’re not terribly flexible; by comparison, protons<sup>3</sup> seem to be able to go wherever they want, without too much difficulty. But I think that’s what he means by that.

Jonathan: Yeah! I mean it’s interesting, right? Because it seems like there’s — to Peter Achinstein:<sup>4</sup> on the one hand, the further you get out on that tree of the underlying conditions it would seem the more fragile something would be, as we’re treating of life-form on earth.

Pat: Yeah.

Jonathan: But at the same time, it’s sort of a unique way of talking about those higher syntheses such that they do have the sort of relative flexibility because they condition the lower, the lower forms.

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<sup>3</sup> It may be possible that Pat intended to say ‘proteins’ at this point.

<sup>4</sup> **Peter Achinstein** (1935 - ) is an American philosopher of science. He is the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein University Professor of Philosophy at Yeshiva University, director of the Yeshiva Center for History and Philosophy of Science, and a professor at Johns Hopkins University.

Pat: Yeah. I think he's also — also implicit here is the remark — we didn't dwell on it last time, but the remark that he makes about the major and the minor flexibility of development. That development — as I mentioned, this is the thing that so intrigued biologists

at the beginning of the nineteenth century, is that developments, embryological developments, seem to have an ability to sustain themselves under a fairly wide range of variabilities, whereas non-living things, non-embryological entities, seem to be much more subject to the whims of the external forces. But I think that's another thing that's implicit here. Okay?

## **1 Unity of the Universe**

**The possibility and the problem of intelligible relations set by the coincidental,**

**The successive transpositions of the problem to higher levels, where it is met by ever more adjustable and more comprehensive modes of unification, and**

**The realization, in accord with successive schedules of probabilities, of the compound conditioned series of concretely possible solutions.”** (*CWL* 3, p. 534, emphasis added).

Pat: Ahm, “**The possibility and the problem of intelligible relations set by the coincidental**” (*CWL* 3, p. 534) goes back to something that we talked about last time, his definition of potency.

**“Potency is what is to be known by intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue. But**

**intellectually patterned experience is dynamic”** (*CWL*

3, p. 534) —

— because what it means to be intellectually patterned is to be experiencing under the throe of the desire to understand and the desire to know.

**“It is experience under some heuristic structure that is derived from the detached and disinterested desire to know; it is experience dominated by that desire.”**

*(CWL 3, p. 471).*

So that your experiencing is being ordered for the sake of understanding what you don't now understand; so experiencing as ordered for the sake of understanding. But it's an odd kind of ordering: it's not the ordering of a systematic order; it's not the ordering of a planetary system; it's not the order of a life-system! It's an ordering that's ordered by unrestricted inquiry.

### **Potential Unity and Finality**

**“For potency is what is to be known by intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue.**

**But intellectually patterned experience is dynamic; it is experience under some heuristic structure that is derived from the detached and disinterested desire to know; it is experience dominated by that desire.**

**And the dynamic orientation of such experience no less than the experience itself has its counterpart in proportionate being.”**

*(CWL 3, p. 471).*

What I wanted to do — I want to draw your attention to the last part of the slide that I have up there:

**And the dynamic orientation of such experience no less than the experience itself has its counterpart in proportionate being.” (CWL 3, p. 471).**

So *the dynamic orientation has its counterpart in proportionate being!* That’s what he’s getting at when he says that *the massive multiplicity of differences and conjunctions and coincidences is a possibility and a problem.* I mentioned this last time; but I wasn’t really satisfied with my explanation of it, and I’ve been doing some thinking about it over the last couple of weeks.

### Potential Unity and Finality.

Potency is known by the intellectually patterned experience of empirical residue.

Intellectually patterned experience has a dynamic orientation — because it is caught up in the throes of unrestricted inquiry.

The dynamic orientation has its counterpart in proportionate being = reality of finality.

— Examples: how we can be overwhelmed and feel awe at the immensity or diversity of particulars; i.e., crowds of people, the vastness of space, the number of beetles, the duration of history, grains of dust.

Such is our experience of the intellectual patterning of the merely empirical residue, of merely empirical differences.

An experience of coincidence as more than coincidence — empirical residue as problem and potential.

The empirical residue poses a problem for us insofar  
as we seek to explain it.

The actual unity of the universe is the universe  
working out an answer to that problem.

## **Potency & the Unity of the Universe**

### **Exercise:**

**Intellectual Patterning of the Empirical Residue:**

**Differences and Multiplicities as Purely Given**

**“it is quite another to understand its laws and frequencies and to postulate as conditions of their possibility noncountable multiplicities of merely empirical differences.” (CWL 3, p. 538).**

So what I'd like to do is to ask you to think about this. Have any of you ever had the experience of being some place where there's a lot of people, and being kind of just blown away by the fact that there's so many people there? Yeah. I had that experience when I went to New York City. I preferred — I had that experience the first time I went to Chicago. It was just sort of breath-taking! Have you ever had the experience of looking at the stars and just been overwhelmed with how many stars there are? And especially if — and this is part of the intellectual patterning — especially if you've studied some cosmology, and you know that the stars you're seeing are less than one millionth of the stars that there are; that there are in any galaxy billions of stars. Have you ever had that experience of being kind of overwhelmed by that? Or have you ever had the experience of being up in the mountains, and looking out and just seeing the vastness of space, the vastness of the amount of extensions that there are? Or have you ever had the experience of being awestruck by how much time there has been? I had this experience a couple of years ago: they had an exhibit

— I’m probably repeating myself — an exhibit of King Tutankhamun; and at that time — but at the time of his reign the pyramids of Giza were two thousand years old. That’s a civilization that lasted for three thousand years, and perished! That’s, you know, that’s an amazing thing, that human beings have been around for so long; and then you could have a civilization that was so successful that it could last that

long and then perish! Or just to contemplate the fact that the universe as we know it since the time of the Big Bang has lasted for fifteen billion years.

*Any moment, any experience that you’ve had would be awe at the immensity, the diversity, the multiplicity of anything, whether it’s space, or time, or numbers of individuals, you’re having some kind of an experience of the intellectual patterning of the merely empirical residue! Each of the human beings that you encounter is intelligibly different from one another, but they are also just empirically different. They are just occupying different places. And if you move from that, that awe-filling experience, to ask yourself: Why is there so much time? Why are there so many individuals? Why are there so many people? Why are there so many beetles? Why is there so much sand? Why is there so much dust?*

There is a book that’s just called “Dust”; that’s its title. And the person who wrote it figured out that most of the dust that you have to wipe off your cabinet came actually from the Sahara Desert. It was carried, ferried by winds from the Sahara Desert; most of the North American dust comes from the Sahara Desert! Why is there so much dust? I’ve heard people say this [Pat smiles broadly] in my family! Why is there so much dust around here? Why is that?

[Class amusement]

*By asking that, Lonergan is saying, we are having an experience of coincidence as more than coincidence. We’re having an experience, an intellectual experience, something*

*that's built into our structure of cognition, which recognizes that there is a problem; that the empirical residue sets a problem: we are experiencing the empirical residue as a problem. And that's what he means by potentiality. We are wondering about it. The unity of the universe is working out the answer to that problem. As the universe evolves it is answering the question of why is there is so much dust! Why are there so many beetles? Why is there so much time? Why is there so much space?*

*Now the fact that we wonder about it, doesn't mean that there is an answer! Of course! But the fact that we wonder about it means that there is a potentiality of an answer; that you can't answer one way or the other by just the experience of the wonder of it. Nor can you answer it by the assertion: well, it doesn't have an answer! Because you can't just say it doesn't have an answer. You have to give a reason why it doesn't have an answer. And the universe has this odd habit of finding answers to the problem of the multiplicities in all sorts of ways that we don't expect.*

**“Its potential unity is grounded in conjugate prime potency, in the merely empirical conjunctions and successions that constitute the inexhaustible manifold of the merely coincidental that successive levels of forms and schemes bring under the intelligible control of system.”** (CWL 3, p. 533).

So that's what he means here by *the potential unity of the universe*; that the vastness and the multiplicity is something that we don't just experience. We experience as problematic! *We experience as something that we desire to understand the reason for it. And the reason for it, to some extent, is answered by the ways in which it is organized by intelligibilities that would be answers to our questions!* So that's what he means by the *“formal unity of the universe”* and by his statement that **“its formal unity is constituted by its successive levels of conjugate forms** (CWL 3, p. 533), *because it's the successive levels of conjugate forms that will, in some fashion, under some condition, and in some arrangement, organize the merely coincidental.*

**Student question about use of statistics to discern difference of coincidence from pattern.**

— **Discussion of the normativity of probability as an intelligible ordering, and how this differs from the ordering of events into systems and into developing systems.**



Okay. Let me pause there and see if people have questions about that. ... Deb?

Deb: I'm wondering ... like statistics would be so important to our development of knowledge in order to distinguish between what we think is coincidental and what is influenced by some pattern, I guess? Which of these it is?

Pat: Except — Well, I'm not sure if I'm understanding the question.

Deb: Because it is basically that's how we intellectually organize what is merely existing or coexisting by, I guess, chance, versus what is coexisting by that pattern?

Pat: Okay. *It's one kind of organization, because the normativity of probability is one thing that is a constitutive factor in the universe. So the fact that the coincidental actually has some kinds of normative regularity which it can only deviate from nonsystematically, that's right! That is an intelligible ordering that is constitutive of the universe.*

*But Lonergan is actually talking about something a little different. He's talking more like the systematic ordering of events into systems and into developing systems. So it isn't just — it isn't just — In other words, you can have the normativity of probability as characteristic of a huge collection of the empirical residue, and that's all there would be. But he's talking about the fact that there's more intelligibility that's possible, and that that gets actualized when you have not just probability as the ideal frequencies that give some normativity; but you actually have what was just chaotic coming together and starting to form systematic and developing wholes!*

I don't know if I've exactly answered your question?

Deb: Yeah.

Pat: Okay.

Student question about how finality applies to a particular thing, for instance a rose; does the particular thing have a finality.

— Finality applied to specific natural entities is distinct from how it applies to human beings or to the whole universe; but the rose has a limited developmental finality, and also plays a part in the finality of the universe.

Pat: Matt?

Matt: When we consider the notion of finality in the entire universe, we have these different schemes of recurrences bringing together different coincidental manifolds that by intelligibility we can identify as ‘things’. So we go through the story of the Big Bang; eventually we get planets. And I can look and I can say, “There’s a planet!” And then it exists within a giant conditioned series of schemes of recurrence. Ah, but I’m wondering about specifically a particular thing in itself. So for example, just like last week, a flower. And maybe a rose that would have a whole biological evolution to the cause and to an emergent being differentiated from other types of flowers. But regarding, let’s say, this particular rose, this particular flower, to what extent does finality, this upward, but indeterminately dynamic orientation, apply to a particular rose? So when I experience it, does it itself have a dynamic upward movement, in the same way that I perceive myself as a knower to have, to be upwardly, but — upwardly moving?

Pat: Okay. Ah, that’s a complicated question. *When you put the tag on “in the same way that I experience myself to be upwardly moving”, certainly not in exactly the same way.*

Matt: — Because it’s not conscious.

Pat: *Because it’s not conscious, and its trajectory is not unrestricted! It’s got a limited finality to it, in a way that human beings don’t have a limited finality!* And so — but the rose is a developing entity. So it does have an internal finality to it. It has a characteristic way of rose-developing, the way that roses develop and the way that gerbils

don't. Gerbils develop differently than roses do; and differently from the way sea-urchins do. *But it has a developmental character to it.*

What Lonergan is talking about here though is of the whole universe —

Matt: Right!

Pat: — the development of the finality of the whole universe.

*And it's a question of the unity of a developing universe,  
which has this massive, incredible, aggregate of  
differences, and multiplicities, that at bottom are just  
merely empirical differences, and yet are more than just  
merely empirical differences because by wondering  
about them we know something about them as being  
problematic, as having a possibility to them.*

Now, when you put it in that context, the rose is in the developing universe. The rose plays a role in the developing universe.

### **The non-countable differences in empirical residue and how it relates to the continuity of space and time.**

When Lonergan talks about this transposition of the coincidental to another level, what he's getting at is that there are a lot of roses. There was a time when the carbon, and the oxygen, and the hydrogen, and the phosphorous, and the nitrogen, that are constitutive of the rose's functioning right now, were just flying around in the atmosphere in a completely coincidental fashion. *And through the rose's developing, they've been incorporated and organized in a system, so that their mere coincidentalness has been given a systematic wholeness in the adult mature rose.* But there's lots of roses around! And the multiplicity — you know, one rose is here, and one rose is there, and another rose is there, and another rose grew last year and died, and is gone. [Pat indicates the multiplicity by gesturing to the four corners of the room]. There are roses through time, through space; and there a transposition of the massive multiplicity of the chemical into a still very large but not quite as massive multiplicity of roses. And what are they there for? Well, in addition to being things of beauty and gifts, they are there for bees to

use, to gather pollen, and so on, or to gather nectar,<sup>5</sup> and so on. Okay? *So that rose plays a part in the development of the unity of the universe!* Okay?

Matt: Yeah, thank you.

## **Potency and the Unity of the Universe**

### **Exercise:**

#### **Intellectual Patterning of the Empirical**

#### **Residue:**

#### **Differences and Multiplicities as Purely Given**

**“it is quite another to understand its laws and frequencies and to postulate as conditions of their possibility noncountable multiplicities of merely empirical differences.” (CWL 3, p. 538).**

We actually did this. I gave you the exercise a minute ago; I just asked you to think about the stars and the dust, and the number of people, and so on.

But what I want to draw attention to here is Lonergan’s comment that

**“It is one thing to experience the sensible manifold of juxtapositions and successions, of extensions and durations. It is quite another to understand its laws and frequencies and to postulate as conditions of their possibility noncountable multiplicities of merely empirical differences.” (CWL 3, p. 538).**

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<sup>5</sup> Honey bees collect pollen and nectar as food for the entire colony, and as they do, they pollinate plants. Nectar stored within their stomachs is passed from one worker to the next until the water within it diminishes. At this point, the nectar becomes honey, which workers store in the cells of the honeycomb.

## Potency and the Unity Of the Universe

**“the merely coincidental becomes space-time  
...**

**This displaces the coincidental to the level of  
*physical* ...**

**There follows its displacement to the level of  
*chemical* processes, where it is overcome by  
the higher system of the cell and by the  
ontogenetic and phylogenetic sequences of the  
*organism* ...**

**On the *psychic* level, interrelations are  
transformed ...**

**Finally, on the level of *intelligence man's*  
relations to the universe are settled by his  
grasp of the relations of the universe and by  
his rational choice of his relation to the**

**universe. (CWL 3, pp. 533-534, emphases  
added).**

So a moment ago, we were talking about the vast numbers; the estimate is that there is ten to the fiftieth power of protons in the universe. But Lonergan is here talking about *non-countable* differences. *That refers to continuity! The continuity of space and the continuity of time is a multiplicity that's non-countable!* That's something we talked about back in the first semester: that you can always find a number in the real numbers that we can't put into any ordered list. *The real numbers are the numbering system that goes along with continuity, with the continuum.* And you can't count it even by saying there's an infinite number in the

sense of an infinite number of integers. That the non-countability of the empirical residue of

continuity is more non-countable than all the integers *irrespective of*<sup>6</sup> how you divide them. But I just threw that in there to give you a sense of just how massive is this empirical residue, this sea of *difference*<sup>7</sup> that is part of the roots of Lonergan's notion of what the potentiality, the possibility, the potential unity of the universe is!

The displacement of the merely coincidental to ever  
higher generic levels.

“The merely coincidental becomes space-time...” The way the universe is structured depends on how energy and momentum are arrayed in space and time (*CWL* 3, pp. 533-534), i.e., how they are merely empirically given.

How this random residual givenness is displaced to the level of physical, then to the level of chemical; then these are further organized into organic coincidental arrays, and finally raised to the psychic level.

This account of unity of the proportionate universe doesn't actually specify the actual or formal unity of the universe, but the potential unity of it.

Finality is exactly this process of the universe working out what its unity is.

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<sup>6</sup> “Irrespective of” is an inserted conjecture by the transcriber who cannot discern the actual words used.

<sup>7</sup> Pat utters this word ‘*difference*’ with a deliberate and pronounced French accent at this point; he may be hinting at the concept’s role in Derrida’s post-structuralist thought.

One might say that the universe is simply not yet united; but we are witnessing the emergence of such a unity.

### **Potency and the Unity Of the Universe**

**“the merely coincidental becomes space-time  
...**

**This displaces the coincidental to the level of  
*physical* ...**

**There follows its displacement to the level of  
*chemical* processes, where it is overcome by  
the higher system of the cell and by the  
ontogenetic and phylogenetic sequences of the  
*organism* ...**

**On the *psychic* level, interrelations are  
transformed ...**

**Finally, on the level of *intelligence man's*  
relations to the universe are settled by his  
grasp of the relations of the universe and by  
his rational choice of his relation to the  
universe. (CWL 3, pp. 533-534, emphases  
added).**

And I wanted to read to you this section: it's again drawing on his section on the unity of the universe, and it's on pages 533 to 534. It's just before you get to five hundred and thirty-four.

**“Thus the merely coincidental becomes space-time through the interrelations of gravitation and electro-magnetic theory.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 533).

What he has in mind here is Einstein’s gravitational field equation. In Einstein’s gravitational field equation, what he figured out is that the structure of space-time would be correlated to the distribution of electro-magnetic and gravitational energy and momentum. that how the universe is structured, how the space of the universe is structured — that business that we talked about way back in chapter five (*CWL 3*, “**Space and Time**”, pp. 163-195) — is dependent upon how energy and momentum are arrayed in space and time. Energy and momentum are arrayed in just merely empirically residual — they’re just given. But by being given, they have consequences for how gravitational organization and electro-magnetic organization is going to manifest itself.

**“This displaces the coincidental to the level of physical events ...”** (*CWL 3*, pp. 533-534, emphasis added).

So this displaces to the level of the sub-atomic particles, what was just, if you like, the randomness, the coincidentalness, the merely empirical givenness of energy,

**“where it is overcome by the higher unities of the chemical elements and their affinities.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 534, emphasis added).

So chemical elements when they form, and molecular structures when they form, are taking what were many, many, disparate sub-atomic particles and bringing them to another kind of organization. But there are still billions and billions of them, scattered throughout the universe, scattered throughout our planet.

**There follows its displacement to the level of chemical processes, where it is overcome by the higher system of the cell and by the ontogenetic and phylogenetic sequences of the organism, in which each stage is either adapting to environment or circumventing it.** (*CWL 3*, p. 534, emphases added).

That’s a flexibility that we saw before, or adaptability that we saw before. So what was a great many diverse scattered chemical processes become organized into a still vast number of organic, but not quite as many. So they are still scattered, they’re still a coincidental array of

— And it's over and over again, it's the coincidentalness, the separateness, but dynamically separated, the different, but dynamically different, which is setting the problem for the next level of intelligible emergence.

**“On the *psychic* level, interrelations are transformed into the developing conjugates governing increasing perceptiveness and ever more nuanced aggressive and affective responses. Finally, on the level of *intelligence man's* relations to the universe are settled by his grasp**

**of the relations of the universe and by his rational choice of his relation to the universe.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 534, emphases added).

Okay. We're going to come back to that in a moment.

And he ends with the remarks that I had on a previous slide.

**“The unity of the universe then is (1) the possibility and the problem of intelligible relations set by the coincidental, (2) the successive transpositions of the problem to higher levels, where it is met by ever more adjustable and more comprehensive modes of unification, and (3) the realization, in accord with successive schedules of probabilities, of the compound conditioned series of concretely possible solutions.”**  
(*CWL 3*, p. 534).

## **1 Unity of the Universe**

**The possibility and the problem of intelligible relations set by the coincidental,**

**The successive transpositions of the problem to higher levels, where it is met by ever more**

**adjustable and more comprehensive modes of unification, and**

**The realization, in accord with successive schedules of probabilities, of the compound conditioned series of concretely possible solutions.”** (*CWL* 3, p. 534, emphasis added).

Okay. Now there’s something striking about this. I said it’s all about the universe: and it’s only — well, it’s actually just one long paragraph long. There’s something striking about it! *This is a section on the unity of the proportionate universe.* Is anyone left unsatisfied by this section, besides me? ... When *I* came to this section the first time I read it: “Okay, I’m going to discover what the unity of the universe is!” And I get to the last line, and I haven’t a clue as to what the unity of the universe is!

[Student amusement]

*And that, after all, is the point! The big emphasis in this is not actually on the actual unity of the universe or the formal unity of the universe; the big emphasis on this is on the potential unity of the universe.* Most of what we can say about the universe is that it’s a prob — the unity of the universe is just a problem! *It’s a problem that’s in the process of working itself out.* It’s this awkwardly but indeterminately directedness — And who gets the next line? ...

## **Finality**

**“I have been indicating a parallel between incomplete knowing heading towards fuller knowing and *an incomplete universe heading towards fuller being, and now I propose to employ the name ‘finality’ to denote the***

*objective member of the parallel” (CWL 3, p. 471).*

*“There is the principle of finality. The underlying manifold is an upwardly but indeterminately directed dynamism towards ever fuller realization of being.” (CWL 3, p. 477, emphasis added).*

*It’s the upwardly but indeterminately directedness that we were talking about last time. The universe is working out what its unity is. And we as human beings struggle to try to understand what that unity is, by following it as it works itself out.*

*So it’s a heuristic account of the unity of the universe. It is not given; he doesn’t give us an answer to it! He gives us, as he says, the structures in which we can talk about the unity of the universe. At the moment, I think, it’s fair to say that the universe is not yet unified. So Lonergan, unlike the metaphysicians that people like Levinas (1906-1995) and Derrida (1930-2004) protest against for their totalizing, for giving an account of the totality of the universe, Lonergan’s account of the totality of the unity of the universe is [incomplete/undetermined](#).<sup>8</sup> But that isn’t to say that there aren’t ways in which you can talk about it. In effect what he is saying is that the unity of the universe is emerging; and yet not completed and not yet determined. And we can say a few things about it, and that’s all we can say about it! But the big emphasis on this is on the potentiality of the universe as setting a challenge for unification. Okay? ...*

**Student question, struggling to understand how the higher levels of integration are not just organizations**

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<sup>8</sup> Pat’s final word in this sentence is inaudible in the recording, and both ‘incomplete’ and ‘undetermined’ are merely conjectures of the transcriber.

of the same, basic reality of physical primordial stuff,  
matter, prime potency, rather than talking about being  
itself.

— Discussion of potency with respect to a  
higher explanatory genus.

- How the conjugate acts at the lower level become the potencies for the next level up.
- Example of how energetic electrons eventually become biologically useful. How the same electron is a conjugate act for physics and a conjugate potency for biology. In other words, the electronic event is the condition of possibility of a living system.

Pat: Matt?

Matt: I'll try to be quick. I feel like I'm still stuck in a counterposition here. Maybe you could help me clear this up. Because when you pointed out that gravitation and electro-magnetism — Can I put a structure on the array on the physical level of being, so — and that governs how all of these atoms and this primordial energy would come together. There was a part in here — I can't remember the pages, maybe somebody could help me out — But he was wondering whether each one of these sciences was dealing with the same stuff, the same matter, all the time. But that — if when you get a higher formulation, it seems to get farther away from this fundamental physical reality, this sort of atomistic, with respect to — And yet I struggle to see how when we speak of finality and the higher being, how we're not still just talking about higher organizations of the same stuff, the same prime potency that doesn't get farther and farther removed from just me imposing these constructs, and then I'm actually talking about being itself, the universal stuff.

Pat: Okay. Ahm, I think those are two different questions, but I'm not sure.

Matt: Okay.

Pat: Ah, something we didn't dwell on — we ran out of time basically — is *what Lonergan means by potency when you move to a higher explanatory genus.*

Matt: Okay.

Pat: And his argument back in chapter fifteen (*CWL* 3, “**Elements of Metaphysics**” pp. 456-511), or his claim back in chapter fifteen is that *what are the conjugate acts at the lower level become the potencies for the next level. And that's what makes it be the next level, that's what makes it be a higher viewpoint.*

*So in living systems energetic electrons are really, really, important. Almost everything that happens — someone might want to correct me on that — but an awful lot of what happens, happens because of energetic electrons. Our systems of biological energy are the mediation of energetic electrons into biologically useful pathways and processes. But an awful lot has to go on to take sort of a wild electron that's flying around out there and turn it into something that can have the energy that's useful in a biological system. Or, for that matter, to take a photon from sunlight and transform it into an electron that has the proper kind of energy. But it's still an electron; it's a little tricky: it's not that it's still an electron, it's an electronic conjugate act — Bear with me.*

[Some class amusement]

Matt: Sure!

Pat: *But it's an electronic event. And from the point of view of physics it's a moving electron, or it's a moving electronic conjugate. From the point of view of a living system, it's a potency for the complicated network of processes that are properly biological. So from the point of view of physics, it's a conjugate act. But from the point of view of biology, it's a conjugate potency. Why? Because what is understood properly by physics as an electronic event is also understood properly by biology as the possibility, the condition for the possibility of a living system. Okay? Is this making some sense?*

Matt: Yeah. That's great! Thank you.

## The Unity of the Human.

Lonergan's treatment of the unity of the universe seems indirect in comparison to his treatment of the unity of the human.

The unity of the universe is primarily treated heuristically, from the viewpoint of its potential unity.

By contrast, Lonergan forcefully declares: "Man *is* one!"

All right! The next topic that I was going to take up is "The Unity of the Human." And I just wanted to point out, in contrast to this ambiguity about the unity of the universe, Lonergan starts [this section "4.3 The Unity of Man" \(CWL 3, pp. 538-543\)](#), the second of the [set of highlighted issues of chapter sixteen specified earlier \(pp. 20-21\)](#), and says "man *is* one!" He doesn't say "the universe is one!" but he says "man *is* one!" So, with that, I'd like to encourage you to take a break.

**End of Part One.**

# **Insight and Beyond**

Class 21, Part Two: March 10th 2010

## **“Metaphysics as Science: The Unity of the Human”**

(*Insight*, Chapter 16: “*Metaphysics as Science*”)

### **Summary of Material**

#### **Chapter 16, §4.3**

The Unity of the Human: “Man is one.”

The word ‘man’ indicates not only the individual, but also the human race.

An important ambiguity for understanding what Lonergan is addressing in this section. Lonergan is uncharacteristically ambiguous here.

Is Man’s central form material or spiritual?

Central forms are differentiated by conjugate forms; while the latter are unified by the former.

“By the [human] ‘self’ is meant a concrete and intelligible *unity-identity-whole* ... characterized by such occurrences as sensing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned, and affirming” (*CWL* 3, p. 343).

To ask about the unity of the human being is to ask about the kind of central form of the human, that is, Man is seen as the unification of certain conjugate acts; the central form is constituted by the conjugate acts it unifies: physical, chemical, biological, psychic, etc.

Lonergan argues that Man's central form is a spiritual unity.

This means that the central form is a spiritual unity independent of materiality and thus sees the soul as immortal.

Lonergan thus takes on the second of Kant's three metaphysical questions — freedom, immortality, and God.

We will consider whether his is a satisfactory argument for immortality.

How the conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher system of man's sensitive living.

- Example: groping in the dark for something versus searching in the light.
- Being guided by intelligence rather than by sense data.
- When searching in the light we order our sensations and movements by means of accumulated insights as the “higher integrations of our sensitive living.”

Student question about whether there are individual conjugate forms of intellectual activity.

- This is exactly the right question: do we acquire the insights that integrate our sensitive living individually, or are they bequeathed to us?
- Discussion of intersubjectivity in the learning process and how sensitive living is a combination of both collective and individual insights.
- The human conjugate forms that integrate sensitive living are both an individual and a communal possession — constitutive of the unity of both the individual and the human race.
- Human interactions are always by means of phantasms — sensible elements — but out of that emerges intelligent, informed, reasonable, responsible and loving human living.

Return to discussion of Human Development from Chapter fifteen, §7.4.

The unity of the human is a developmental unity; not born with our unity; we develop our unity.

Human Development as a tripartite structure differentiated by our central form.

It operates on three interrelated levels: the organic, psychic, and intellectual (= intelligence + reasonableness).

Human authenticity (“genuineness”) as facing the challenges arising from the intersection of these three levels.

Changes on any of the levels can initiate challenges for development on the other levels and set the conditions for them.

Even though developments on any level require adaptations (developments) in the other levels, usually we think of how the organic sets conditions for developments on the psychic and intellectual [and rational] levels.

For example, Erik Erikson in *Childhood and Society* explored how organic changes influence psychic developments.

Understanding the proper way to integrate the new changes into authentic living.

Moreover, this process never ends because unlike other organisms, the challenge of human development is never-ending; humans are always learning something new.

Discussion of the two-fold way in which the conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher systems of human sensitive living: ‘unconsciously’ and ‘consciously.’

[Here Lonergan is not using ‘conscious’ in his technical sense, but rather in the more colloquial sense of *understanding* what is going on in one’s own activity.]

‘Unconsciously’ as when intelligence patterns our flow of experiencing.

‘Consciously’ intelligence aims grasping systems that organize the contents of sensitive experiences — in other words, it is directed at the universe of proportionate being.



Elaboration of this idea:

- Knowing oneself as a knower has to do with knowing one's place within proportionate being
- Proportionate being encompasses both material and spiritual (i.e., intellectual) reality.
- Proportionate being is a whole, and human activity is part of that whole.
- Considerable intellectual development of humankind to comprehend oneself as really being who we are as a spiritual reality functioning in a comprehending reality of the universe.

Knowing our place and our proper activity in the universe affects how we will and act in that universe.

Man's knowledge of his place and function in the universe is the starting point of Lonergan's ethics, in the context of *Insight*.

**Chapter 16, §5.**

Therefore, the universe brings forth its own unity by bringing forth developing human unity (*CWL* 3, p. 544).

Discussion of our awareness of finality, and the human role in advancing the unity of the universe.

But where does human development come from?

Human beings (and therefore human development) emerges within and as an essential constituent of the finality of all of proportionate being.

Human activity of understanding the universe and acting on that understanding is part of the way, the way that finality works out the solution to the ‘problem’ posed by the coincidental (potency).

Humans have the unique capacity to think of intelligent forms that don’t yet exist, and to put them into play, and use them to influence the potency of the universe; hence, our activity is a means by which the universe organizes itself.

Here we have Lonergan’s only claim about the unity of the universe (rather than its potential unity) but only in the context of the discussion of *human* unity.

*This* is what Lonergan means by metaphysics as science.

When Lonergan speaks of “intellectual conversion” after *Insight*, recognizing that this is true of reality is part of what he has in mind.

Self-appropriation means understanding ourselves as part of a process that we continue by our own activity.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. and *The Divine Milieu*.

Fred Lawrence once asked Lonergan what he meant by metaphysics, and he responded that what he meant can also be found in *The Divine Milieu*.

Teilhard de Chardin was a twentieth century Jesuit scholar, paleontologist, scientist, and mystic.

Lonergan's metaphysics was epitomized by Teilhard's book, *The Divine Milieu*.

Teilhard endeavored to explain how he had come to understand the harmony of science and Christian faith.

How Teilhard's reception in theological and scientific circles influenced Lonergan.

Teilhard's project was to show that human actions matter, despite our seemingly minor place in the universe.

"In each of us the whole history of the world ... is in part reflected."

We both "make our own souls" and also contribute to a much larger '*opus*' of the universe.

Human actions are enduring *because* they participate in the divine will.

The finality of universe becomes conscious in us, and the universe is completed in our actions.

Lonergan took up Teilhard's project of showing the relation of humanity to finality and unity of the universe, but he based it upon self-appropriation rather than harmony with the divine will.

# Insight and Beyond

Class 21, Part Two: March 10th 2010

## “Metaphysics as Science: The Unity of the Human”

(*Insight*, Chapter 16: “*Metaphysics as Science*”)

### Chapter 16, §4.3

The Unity of the Human: “Man is one.”

The word ‘man’ indicates not only the individual, but also the human race.

An important ambiguity for understanding what Lonergan is addressing in this section. Lonergan is uncharacteristically ambiguous here.

Is Man’s central form material or spiritual?

Central forms are differentiated by conjugate forms; while the latter are unified by the former.

“By the [human] ‘self’ is meant a concrete and intelligible *unity-identity-whole* ... characterized by such occurrences as sensing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned, and affirming” (*CWL* 3, p. 343).

To ask about the unity of the human being is to ask about the kind of central form of the human, that is, Man is seen as the unification of certain conjugate acts; the central form is constituted by the conjugate acts it unifies: physical, chemical,

biological, psychic, etc.

## 2. Unity of the Human

**“Man is one.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 538).

**“Are we to say that man’s central form is material or spiritual?”** (*CWL 3*, p. 542).

**Human “central form could be separated from prime potency [matter] without ceasing to ground an existing unity and identity.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 543).

The next highlight of chapter sixteen (*CWL 3*, “*Metaphysics as Science*”, pp. 512-552) that I wanted to take is *the unity of the human*. And Lonergan begins with this big bold statement which we saw just before the break: **“Man is one!”** (*CWL 3*, p. 538).

Before I go any further I want to comment on the fact that I’m not using gender inclusive language here. You may have noticed that periodically I substitute gender inclusive language in some of Lonergan’s quotes.

The book *Insight* was written in 1957; we’re in a different era with regard to that. But *there is a particular problem with the use of the word ‘man’ for which, as far as I can tell, people have not come up with a satisfactory gender inclusive solution. In Lonergan’s time, and in previous times, when people use the word ‘man’ it can stand for both the unity of the individual male human being; but also for the unity of the whole of the human race. And I’m using the word ‘man’ in this case, because I want to read that ambiguity in here; because I think that it’s an*

important ambiguity for us to think about in relationship to what  
Lonergan is talking about.

Which is to say probably when I first read this, perhaps when you first read this section, you were thinking the unity of yourself, the unity of the individual human being. And that is definitely in this section! But I think there is also a remark or a claim about the unity of the whole of the human race that's being discussed here. And Lonergan is doing it in some — in an uncharacteristically ambivalent way, *I think*.

So “**man is one.**” (*CWL* 3, p. 538). Now, the key to Lonergan's argument in this section about the unity of the human has to do with “**central form.**” So remember now by “**central form**” Lonergan means the intelligibility that's to be known by understanding that grasps the unity-identity-whole of all the data about that unity. Which is to say *it's not the data but the unity that determines what the data are*. So in some sense you don't know what the data on someone, some entity, is, until you know, until you understand its unity. *So central form is the unity of the human.*

There are several passages in this chapter in *Insight* where Lonergan talks about the relationship between central form and conjugate forms. And I didn't have time to manage to get those quotations onto the slides. And I'm not going to fumble around them; So I'm just going to paraphrase them.

**“The difference between our central form and Aristotle's substantial form is merely nominal. For the Aristotelian substantial form is what is known by grasping an intelligible unity, an *unum per se*.”** [a thing that is per se one]. (*CWL* 3, p. 462).

But there's a recurrence in the discussion in chapter sixteen (*CWL* 3, “*Metaphysics as Science*”, pp. 512-552) that *central forms are differentiated by their conjugate forms. And conjugate forms are unified by their central form*. Now we saw this in a way when we talked about *self-affirmation* and *how people are characterized*. When Lonergan asks us to engage in the project of self-affirmation and indeed self-appropriation, he says: And by a self I mean a unity-identity-whole characterized by such activities as experiencing, inquiring, understanding, reflecting, judging, et cetera.

**“By the ‘self’ is meant a concrete and intelligible unity -identity-whole .... characterized by such occurrences**

as sensing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned, and affirming.” (CWL 3, p. 343).

Yeah, characterized by the acts — When as readers we get to chapter fifteen on the metaphysical elements (CWL 3, “**Elements of Metaphysics**” pp. 456-511), what we know is that Lonergan is using the term ‘self’ there as an abbreviation for “characterized by the *acts* of the conjugate *forms* of the conjugate *potencies* of sensitivity, intelligence, reasonableness.”

Lonergan argues that Man’s central form is a spiritual unity.

This means that the central form is a spiritual unity independent of materiality and thus sees the soul as immortal.

Lonergan thus takes on the second of Kant’s three metaphysical questions — freedom, immortality, and God.

We will consider whether his is a satisfactory argument for immortality.

So to ask the question about the unity of the human being is to ask the question about what kind of central form does the human being have.

*And the central form that the human being has is differentiated by, is constituted by, is a unification of its distinctive conjugate acts. It’s a unity not only of its distinctive conjugate acts, but some of the conjugate acts that it shares with other beings. We have physical conjugate acts and forms, chemical conjugate forms, biological conjugate forms, and psychic or sensitive conjugate forms; but we also have intelligible conjugate forms. And that’s what is distinctive about human beings, at least as Lonergan argues.*

*And so the question is if you have a central form that's characterized in this way, that's differentiated in this way,*

*that has specifically intellectual and reasonable conjugate forms, is it a material being or a spiritual being? Is its unity a material unity or a spiritual unity? Lonergan's argument is going to be that it is a spiritual unity. But it's a complicated argument to that conclusion.*

And from that conclusion he is going for — he is going to make a further argument, namely, *that human central form could be separated from prime potency*, which is what he means by matter in these contexts, *without ceasing to ground an existing unity and identity. In other words, he is making a claim about human immortality.*

Now you may have noticed that there's a sort of an ongoing battle with Kant; and of course the three questions, the three metaphysical questions, that Kant says are not answerable by pure reason are *freedom, immortality, and the existence of God*, all of which Lonergan is going to treat in succession in this book. So it's a little bit of “in your face, Kant!” type of a movement. And this is the first one we encounter.

We'll look at what he is doing in this section; and then *think about whether or not this is a satisfactory argument for the potential immortality of the human*. But that in outline is what he is doing here. So first of all, it's *a claim that man is one. It's an argument that the oneness of the human has to do with the distinctive and specifically human central form, and that that human central form is properly characterized as spiritual, at least in Lonergan's sense of spiritual; and that this has implications for the immortality of the human, at least the possible immortality of the human.*

**How the conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher system of man's sensitive living.**

— **Example: groping in the dark for something versus searching in the light.**

— **Being guided by intelligence rather than**

by sense data.

— When searching in the light we order our sensations and movements by means of accumulated insights as the “higher integrations of our sensitive living.”

## **2. Unity of the Human**

**“No less than electrons and atoms, plants and animals, man is individual by his central potency, one in in nature by his central form, existent by his central act. Moreover, this basic unity extends to the distinctive conjugates of human intellectual activity.**

**“the conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher system of man’s sensitive living. In each case an otherwise coincidental manifold of lower conjugate acts is rendered systematic by conjugate forms on a higher level.” (CWL 3, p. 538).**

**“Man is individual by his central potency, one in in nature by his central form, existent by his central act. Moreover, this basic unity extends to the distinctive conjugates of human intellectual activity.” (CWL 3, p. 538).**

**“The conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher system of man’s sensitive living. In each case an otherwise coincidental manifold of lower conjugate acts is rendered systematic by conjugate forms on a higher level.”** (CWL 3, p. 538, emphases added).

Okay. So first of all, let’s think here about what does he mean by the **“otherwise coincidental manifold of lower conjugate acts”** when with the realm that we’re focusing on here is *the relationship between human sensitive activity and human intellectual activity*? What would be some examples of the **“coincidental manifold of lower conjugate acts”**? .... that are being organized by conjugate forms of human intellectual activity? ... Greg?

Greg: The empirical activity<sup>9</sup> of the senses.

Pat: Ah, okay. Give me some examples? ...

Greg: Groping in the dark for the door [Greg displays with his hand a door-handle-seeking gesture].

Pat: Okay. Good. Excellent! *That’s part of human sensitive living. Groping in the dark for the door knob! That’s part of the manifold of your sensitive experiences, particularly if you’re groping!* It’s got a lot of coincidentalness to it. And what’s the difference if you turn on the lights? ... Bill Cosby has this great — He has a lot of great skits, but one of them is; getting up in the middle of the night and deciding he didn’t want to turn on the light and this voice saying to him, “No, don’t do this! Turn on the lights!”

[Class laughter]

What happens if you turn on the light?

Shabit: It’s no longer groping.

Pat: Why is it no longer groping? ... Shabit said it’s no longer groping. And turning on the light, why are you no longer groping?

[Two or more students speak simultaneously, hence inaudibly.]

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<sup>9</sup> Greg’s word here is somewhat inaudible and unclear to the transcriber, and ‘activity’ is merely his conjecture.

Student: You're sensing is directed. You're reaching your — Your movement is directed by —

Pat: Okay. What is directing your movement and your sensing?

Student: Your seeing.

Pat: No! That's wrong!

[Pat is immediately surprised and disappointed: Class amused]

Pat: I promised I would never say that again! ... It's not your sensing that's directing, because your sensing is not directing when you're in the dark. You're still sensing, right? *It's your intelligence!*

You have learned how to use the manifold which seems very organized to you, but *it's only because you have learned how to pattern your visual experiences when it's light much better than you have when it's dark*. If you live only in the dark, you would probably be able to pattern those experiences better. It's because we live so much of our time in the light, that our intellectual achievements, our intellectual skills, our skills of intellectually patterning the rich manifold colored set of experiences that we have, are much more highly developed. ... People who are sight-impaired are able to intellectually pattern their auditory experiences much better than people who rely on their sight experiences, their in daylight or in artificial light experiences, to guide their sensitive living. So it's a matter of the acquisition of lots of common sense insights that help us first of all to know what to make of what we're seeing and what we're feeling. And furthermore, we know how to do the patterning of our experiencing so as to assist us in doing whatever we're doing, when Greg was groping in the dark there, when you're trying to get into the house, or trying to get a drink of water, or whatever it was you were doing. That's what he's getting at here: *the use of conjugate forms of intellectual activity* “**constitute the higher system of man's sensitive living**” (CWL 3, p. 538), **which** means the ways in which we have contents of insights that do that patterning for us. Okay?



Student question about whether there are individual conjugate forms of intellectual activity.

— This is exactly the right question: do we acquire the insights that integrate our sensitive living individually, or are they bequeathed to us?

— Discussion of intersubjectivity in the learning process and how sensitive living is a combination of both collective and individual insights.

— The human conjugate forms that integrate sensitive living are both an individual and a communal possession — constitutive of the unity of both the individual and the human race.

— Human interactions are always by means of phantasms — sensible elements — but out of that emerges intelligent, informed, reasonable, responsible and loving human living.

Pat: Greg?

Greg: Regarding the first line of that second quote,

**“the conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher system of man’s sensitive living”**  
(*CWL* 3, p. 538),

can we have or speak about individual **“conjugate forms of human intellectual activity”**, or is that only something that a community can do?

Pat: That is exactly the right question!! I'll pay you for that afterwards.

[class laughter]

*Why did I stick with the non-gender sensitive term here? I think this is exactly where the ambiguity shows up. When it says “man’s sensitive living” (CWL 3, p. 538), are we talking about Greg’s sensitive living, Professor Byrne’s sensitive living, or are we talking about the human race’s sensitive living? And I think that there is a bit of an ambiguity here. I think both are entailed. Conjugate forms of human intellectual activity means the explanatorily reformulated contents of all the insights that we have had!*

But where did you get the insights that you’ve had? ... *In one sense they are all yours! They have to be all yours, or you wouldn’t understand. But in another sense, most of the insights that we have were bequeathed to us; in our infancy, it’s our parents and our aunts and uncles and our grandparents and the neighbor parents and the neighbor kids, and so on. Just simple things about knowing —*

I was visiting my family in upstate New York over the break, and my brother and sister-in-law have three grand-children. And so there was a lot of toys around the house. (I have a grand-child, so there are toys around in my house, but not quite as many). And I got there, and they had this really cool thing that I’d never seen before, a stomp rocket. You’ve probably seen these!

[Class laughter]

So it’s got a little tube and it’s got a little squishy thing, and you pull the rocket over a nozzle, and you stomp on it [Pat stomps his foot on the floor]; and I said; “That is so cool!”

[Class laughter]

“I got to get one for my grandson!” And my brother looks at me and says: “You got to get one for yourself!!”

[Loud class laughter]

So I got this stomp rocket and I brought it home; my grandson came over last Saturday, so I showed it to him. Ah, he thought that was really cool! I showed him the way I stomped on it. But he’s only two years old —

[Huge class laughter]

— so he doesn't have the weight that I've accumulated over the last years of my life. And so he stomped on it and sort of looked at it [quizzically](#). So I said, "No, come here Tommy!" And I picked up his leg and I went like that with it [*Pat stomps the floor again*] and it went, you know, about three feet high. And he laughed, *and then he did it!* But then he was able to — So he knew — From watching me, he was seeing that there was something about stepping on it, and making it go up. Once he actually could feel in his muscles what was involved in that kind of stomp you need to make it go, and then he was able to do it higher.

*Well, that's sort of a microcosm of the way in which we acquire an awful lot of our intellectual conjugate forms. They are the inventory of the human community. And we pass them on to each other. Most of our insights are vastly facilitated by other people who help us understand. We talked about that back when we were looking at chapter six (CWL 3, "Common Sense as Intellectual", pp. 196-204) about the informal education that takes place in just every walk of life, as opposed to the formal education that takes place in the classroom. In both cases, insights are being communicated! Some insights are better communicated in classrooms, some are better communicated in just the ordinary course of events. But by the time we get to the levels and ages that we are right now, we have acquired a vast number of conjugate forms of human intellectual activity that we use to organize our sensitive living. So that we're doing a little bit less groping in the dark than we did a year ago, or ten years ago, or thirty years ago. Okay?*

*So there a way in which, when he's talking about man's sensitive living, he's talking about the individual human being's sensitive living, but he's also talking about the community's sensitive living, the history of the human community's sensitive living, that has been organized by the acquisition of a culture of conjugate forms of intellectual activity. So I think that that ambiguity is there! It means I think, oh, that what comes to us as our conjugate forms of intellectual activity is in large measure the possession of the whole human community. And our sensitive living has developed by our interactions with the sensitive living of other human beings. That's how they communicate insights to us.*

We've talked about this before. *You don't teach somebody an insight by planting the insight inside their skull. You do it by giving them phantasms; and by giving phantasms, you are participating in sensitive living. And by receiving the phantasms, they are participating in sensitive living. And, you know, it's really this remarkable, miraculous thing, about human intelligence! That all we ever do is interact with one another on the sensitive level! But out of that emerges understanding and intelligent, informed, and reasonable, and responsible, modern living.* It's really quite remarkable that, you know, we don't give ourselves immediately those, we give it to one another those things mediated through our sensitive living. So the unity of the human has to do with what kind of unity is involved in the community that's the intellectual community of human organizing of our living.

Return to discussion of Human Development from  
Chapter fifteen, §7.4.

The unity of the human is a developmental unity; not  
born with our unity; we develop our unity.

Human Development as a tripartite structure  
differentiated by our central form.

It operates on three interrelated levels: the *organic*,  
*psychic*, and *intellectual* (= intelligence +  
reasonableness).

Human authenticity ("genuineness") as facing the  
challenges arising from the intersection of these three  
levels.

Changes on any of the levels can initiate challenges for  
development on the other levels and set the conditions  
for them.

## Human Development

**“Organic, psychic, and intellectual development are not three independent processes.”**

**“They are interlocked, with the intellectual providing a higher integration of the psychic and the psychic providing a higher integration of the organic” [and neural]. (CWL 3, p. 494).**

**“What the existentialist discovers and talks about ... the metaphysician outlines in heuristic categories.” (CWL 3, p. 495).**

I skipped over very fast last week, at the very end of the class, or two weeks ago, at the very end of the class, what Lonergan has to say about human development in chapter fifteen, **“Elements of Metaphysics”** (CWL 3, pp. 456-511). And we’re not going to have time to talk too much more about it this week. But I want to at least join that issue with this question about the unity of the human. *The unity of the human is a developmental unity! The unity of the human is not something that we are born with; it’s something that develops.* And Lonergan makes a big deal of the fact that human development operates on three interrelated levels, (i) *the organic or the biological*, (ii) *the psychic or the sensitive*, and (iii) *the intellectual*; and these **“are not three independent processes”** (CWL 3, p. 494)!

**“They are interlocked, with the intellectual providing a higher integration of the psychic and the psychic providing a higher integration of the organic” [and neural]. (CWL 3, p. 494).**

And this is where Lonergan makes his connection with what he thinks the existential thinkers are about.

**“What the existentialist discovers and talks about ...  
the metaphysician outlines in heuristic categories.”**

(*CWL* 3, p. 495).

We saw his use of the word ‘genuineness’ in the context of human development. That human genuineness, or later on he realized that the term that was in vogue was really ‘**authenticity**’; that human authenticity consists in what? *Human authenticity, for Lonergan, consists in ever facing the challenges for living that come our way. And to a large extent, the challenges that come our way are set by this intersection of these three levels of the organic, the psychic, and the intellectual.*

## **Explanatory Genera and Human Development**

Slide in three colors illustrating  
the Organic, the Psychic, and the Intellectual  
Processes

So human development begins as a purely organic development, as the human organism begins in *fertilization*, and passes through the stages of *blastula*<sup>10</sup> and *gastrula*,<sup>11</sup> and gradually develops *organic structures of the neural tube*, and the *primitive brain*, and some initial *neural differentiation*. At some point in the development of the human organism the display of neural tissues sets the conditions for the emergence of *consciousness, sensitive consciousness*; and at that point we get the development of *sensory motor abilities*. And as we saw from chapter six (*CWL* 3, “**Common Sense as Intellectual**”, pp. 196-204), our psyche has a flexible way of selecting and integrating from the neural events that condition

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<sup>10</sup> Blastula: the early developmental stage of an animal or human, following the morula stage and consisting of a single, spherical layer of cells enclosing a hollow, central cavity.

<sup>11</sup> Gastrula: an embryo at the stage following the blastula, when it is a hollow cup-shaped structure having three layers of cells. Thus the process of *gastrulation* is a phase early in the embryonic development of most animals and humans, during which the single-layered blastula is reorganized into a trilaminar (“three-layered”) structure known as the *gastrula*. These three germ layers are known as the ectoderm, mesoderm, and endoderm.

*different kinds of acts of sensation and response.* But as our sensory motor development progresses to a certain point, it sets the conditions for the emergence of *questions and insights.*

Now, what Lonergan does in chapter fifteen, “**Elements of Metaphysics**” (CWL 3, pp. 456-511), and he mentions it again here in chapter sixteen, “**Metaphysics as Science**” (CWL 3, pp. 512-552), is that *the initiative can actually come from any one of the three directions.* So the initiative for physical, for organic development, can come from psychic, for psychic development can come from intellectual, for organic development can come from intellectual, for intellectual development can come from organic, and so on.

The simplest example of the way in which intellectual development can set the conditions for organic development is if you ever decide to take on any kind of training, particularly any kind of athletic training: you have to actually change your musculature and your nervous responsiveness if you want to be good at a certain sport. Some of you actually wrote about this in the “Insight Papers” last semester. So you have to — So your intellectual — If you have a good coach, what the good coach does is to give you insights into how your muscles feel, how the balance in your ear feels, the right kind of body posture, and all those sorts of things. *That’s the way in which your intellectual development is setting the conditions for your organic development.*

*Your intellectual development can set the conditions for your psychic development.* That’s what you do when you become a serious student. When I first started reading, I couldn’t read anything for more than about fifteen minutes without kind of letting my mind drift. I can now sit down and read things for hours and not go off on tangents; but that’s something that I had to develop: my intellectual abilities had to start to structure the way in which my psyche was doing its selectivity of the capacities that are bearable in our neurophysiology. But ordinarily what we tend to think of is the way in which the organic sets the conditions for the psychic which then sets the conditions for the intellectual.

**Even though developments on any level require adaptations (developments) in the other levels, usually we think of how the organic sets conditions for developments on the psychic and intellectual [and rational] levels.**

For example, Erik Erikson in *Childhood and Society* explored how organic changes influence psychic developments.

Understanding the proper way to integrate the new changes into authentic living.

Moreover, this process never ends because unlike other organisms, the challenge of human development is never-ending; humans are always learning something new.

## **Erik Erikson**

### **Critical developments in the body and neurophysiology of children:**

**Sucking and feeding**

**Biting and teething**

**Grasping, standing, walking**

**Anal and sphincter control**

**Genital and erotic developments**

When I had to re-record that session where we lost the audio back in January, I used that as an opportunity to introduce some material that I had wanted to use back when we actually had the class in November, material from Erik Erikson. Erik Erikson did this very impressive study of childhood development; and he identified these major transitional moments in — critical stages, critical transitions, in the development of every human being; and that they are set by major organic changes; the first of which is actually the challenge of child-rearing to suck and be fed, which is not something that the child actually does without

some level of insight, it seems. It's a little hard to make the case for that, but children do have to learn how to nurse, and in some children it comes more quickly and in some it comes **with more difficulty**. And Erikson has a whole section in his book "**Childhood and Society**", where he talks about the ways in which cultures develop customs that enable mothers to teach their children how to nurse. The next big development has to do with the irruption of teeth; that as children start to teethe, they need to have some soothing of the irritations that are caused by the growing in of teeth; and the cultures have to find ways of helping children accommodate to that moment. And then of other things like grasping and standing and walking, anal and sphincter control; and then the many stages of sexual and genital development that set conditions for sensitive integration and intellectual integration of those.

*So human development is a tripart development in which developments on one stage require some accommodation on the other stage. Human beings as human beings never stop developing, because, unlike other organic beings, our maturity is always in the future. There is never a time when we've understood everything that there is to understand! And every time we understand something new, it at least raises the possibility of the need for some accommodations on the parts of our psychic and our organic self, to keep pace with that intellectual development. Because we have animal bodies, our animal bodies are not of a fixed kind; that we don't master how to deal with our bodies at one moment and then are settled for life, despite what many people seem to do: many people are simply are still living with an adolescent mind in an ever growing and ever aging body as you probably have noticed, some of us; some aspects of our culture tend to nourish that illusion.*

[Some student amusement]

*So for Lonergan, human authenticity means responding to the challenges as they come along! And the basic locus of the response is our understanding, understanding what's the proper way to integrate and to solve the problems of the potencies that are set by the organic and the psychic. Okay? So human development is this tripartite structure that is the differentiation of our central form. So our central form is really differentiated by the physical, the chemical, the biological, the psychic, and the intellectual; but the*

*intellectual is the one that is largely doing the integrating of our development.*

Discussion of the two-fold way in which the conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher systems of human sensitive living: ‘unconsciously’ and ‘consciously.’

[Here Lonergan is not using ‘conscious’ in his technical sense, but rather in the more colloquial sense of *understanding* what is going on in one’s own activity.]

‘Unconsciously’ as when intelligence patterns our flow of experiencing.

‘Consciously’ intelligence aims grasping systems that organize the contents of sensitive experiences — in other words, it is directed at the universe of proportionate being.

Elaboration of this idea:

- Knowing oneself as a knower has to do with knowing one’s place within proportionate being
- Proportionate being encompasses both material and spiritual (i.e., intellectual) reality.



- Proportionate being is a whole, and human activity is part of that whole.
- Considerable intellectual development of humankind to comprehend oneself as really being who we are as a spiritual reality functioning in a comprehending reality of the universe.

Knowing our place and our proper activity in the universe affects how we will and act in that universe.

Man's knowledge of his place and function in the universe is the starting point of Lonergan's ethics, in the context of *Insight*.

## **2. Unity of the Human**

**“Still, if we ask in what manner precisely the conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher system of man's sensitive living, we are confronted not with a single but with a twofold array of facts.**

**For human intellectual activity provides the higher system for sensitive living both unconsciously and consciously.”** (*CWL* 3, p. 538).

Now, in his discussion of the unity of the human, Lonergan goes on to say:

**“Still, if we ask in what manner precisely the conjugate forms of human intellectual activity constitute the higher system of man’s sensitive living, we are confronted not with a single but with a twofold array of facts.”** (CWL 3, p. 538).

*Now this is how he is going to raise this question about whether or not the human unity is material or spiritual, whether the conjugate form of the human being is material or spiritual.*

**For human intellectual activity provides the higher system for sensitive living both unconsciously and consciously.”** (CWL 3, p. 538).

## **2. Unity of the Human**

**“It does so unconsciously inasmuch as it grounds the pattern in which sensitive experience occurs, and in this respect it is a higher system to sensitive living as sensitive living is a higher system to organic living.”**  
(CWL 3, p. 538).

**“It does so unconsciously inasmuch as it grounds the pattern in which sensitive experience occurs.”** (CWL 3, p. 538).

And we talked about that: the way in which our desire to understand where we are, how to find what we're looking for, whether in the dark or the light — *It's our intellectual desire to understand that is patterning our experiencing.*

## **2. Unity of the Human**

**“But there also is a conscious intellectual control of one’s sensitive living, and this differs enormously from the former. For conscious intelligence is engaged primarily in grasping the intelligible systems relevant, not to one’s sensitive living, but to the contents of one’s sensitive experience.**

**By this shift from subjective acts to objective contents, it is headed towards the systematization, not of the particular animal that I am, but of the whole universe of being. (CWL 3, pp. 538-539).**

**“But there also is a conscious intellectual control of one’s sensitive living, and this differs enormously from the former. For conscious intelligence is engaged primarily in grasping the intelligible systems relevant, not to one’s sensitive living, but to the contents of one’s sensitive experience. (CWL 3, pp. 538-539).**

You can argue about how ‘primarily’ is — how strong the sense of ‘primarily’ should be. *His point is that our insights or our questions are about the contents of our experiences, not primarily about our experiencing!* And because they are about the contents of our experiences, they are about being! We’re asking about what is! The contents of our experiences give rise to questions about ‘What?’, and the answers to ‘What?’ give rise to questions about ‘Is?’ So the intellectual forms of human living are to a certain extent, or as Lonergan is going to argue, to a large extent, they’re not just about us, they’re about the universe.

**“By this shift from subjective acts to objective contents, it [our intelligence] is headed towards the systematization, not of the particular animal that I am, but of the whole universe of being.”** (*CWL* 3, p. 539).

So ‘systematization’ at this point means *understanding*. I’m trying to understand what is; not just me. And this goes back to something that we saw in chapter fifteen, “**Elements of Metaphysics**” (*CWL* 3, pp. 456-511).

## **2. Unity of the Human**

**“Intellectual development ... reveals to a man a universe of being in which he is but an item, and a universal order in which his desires and fears, delight and anguish are but infinitesimal components in the history of mankind.**

**It invites man to become intelligent and reasonable not only in his knowing but also in his living, to guide his actions by referring them, not as an animal to a habitat, but as an intelligent being to the intelligible context of some universal order that is or is to be.”** (*CWL* 3, p. 498).

**“This shift from subjective acts to objective contents ... is headed towards the systematization, not of the particular animal that I am, but of the whole universe of being.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 539).

And in chapter fifteen, “**Elements of Metaphysics**” (*CWL 3*, pp. 456-511), Lonergan, in talking about human development, says that: Where does human development lead us, when the more that we think about the contents of our experiences, the more that we try to understand the whys? and the whats? of the contents of our experiences, the more it —

**“— reveals to a man a universe of being in which he is but an item, and a universal order in which his desires and fears, delight and anguish are but infinitesimal components in the history of mankind.** (*CWL 3*, p. 498).

I reverted to the gender insensitive uses here because I think what he says: **“It invites man to become intelligent and reasonable not only in his knowing but also in his living”**(*CWL 3*, p. 498), *I think he means ‘man’ both us as individual human beings and us as a race.* So the discovery that we are infinitesimal components not only in the history of human kind, but in the history of the universe, invites **man** —

**“— to become intelligent and reasonable not only in his knowing but also in his living, to guide his actions by referring them, not as an animal to a habitat, but as an intelligent being to the intelligible context of some universal order that is or is to be.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 498).

Now, notice that in a couple of places in chapter sixteen, “**Metaphysics as Science**” (*CWL 3*, pp. 512-552), Lonergan makes the remark that *to know yourself as a knower is to know yourself as within being, as within proportionate being; that because he’s talking about this generalized empirical method that includes both the data of consciousness and the data of sense, proportionate being encompasses both what we’re used to thinking of, physical and if you like, material reality, and also conscious — or what he is going to call spiritual reality. That the proportionate universe is a whole, and that human activities are parts of that whole.*

And what he here says that **intellectual development** “invites man to become **intelligent and reasonable not only in his knowing but also in his living**” (CWL 3, p. 498), *he means I think, the human race! This is a collaborative effort! It takes a considerable amount of intellectual tradition to get to the point where people can recognize, and not just believe, but intellectually own themselves as being indeed really components in a reality that is more encompassing than themselves.*

## **2. Unity of the Human**

- **“And it is within its knowledge of the universe that knowledge of itself is attained,**
- **knowledge of its function in the universe is acquired,**
- **and the grounds for willing the execution of that function provided.**
- **Finally, it is through willing that conscious intellectual control of sensitive living is effected.”** (CWL 3, p. 539, emphasis added).

**“And it is within its knowledge of the universe that knowledge of itself is attained, knowledge of its function in the universe is acquired, and the grounds for willing the execution of that function provided. Finally, it is through willing that conscious intellectual control of sensitive living is effected.”** (CWL 3, p. 539).

So “it is within its knowledge of the universe that knowledge of itself,” that self-knowledge, “is attained, and knowledge of” our “function in the universe is acquired.”



*How do we function in the universe? Self-affirmation tells us that, in the most profound sense, we function in the universe by the intellectual forms that integrate our sensitive living, that integrate our organic and our psychic conjugate potencies into things that are properly human activities. So our function in the universe is to operate intelligently in the universe.*

**“And the grounds for willing the execution of that function,”** of our function, of our proper activity as Aristotle puts it, is **“provided. Finally, it is through willing that conscious intellectual control of sensitive living is effected.”** (CWL 3, p. 539, emphases added).

Now here he is pointing ahead to chapter eighteen (CWL 3, **“The Possibility of Ethics”**, pp. 618-656). In chapter eighteen, his chapter on ethics, Lonergan is going to give us a full account of what he means by *willing*, and how it relates to our thinking and to our sensitive dimensions, our organic and sensitive dimensions.

### **Chapter 16, §5.**

Therefore, the universe brings forth its own unity by bringing forth developing human unity (CWL 3, p. 544).

Discussion of our awareness of finality, and the human role in advancing the unity of the universe.

But where does human development come from?

Human beings (and therefore human development) emerges within and as an essential constituent of the finality of all of proportionate being.

Human activity of understanding the universe and acting on that understanding is part of the way, the way that finality works out the solution to the ‘problem’ posed by the coincidental (potency).

Humans have the unique capacity to think of intelligent forms that don’t yet exist, and to put them into play, and use them to influence the potency of the universe; hence, our activity is a means by which the universe organizes itself.

Here we have Lonergan’s only claim about the unity of the universe (rather than its potential unity) but only in the context of the discussion of *human* unity.

*This* is what Lonergan means by metaphysics as science.

When Lonergan speaks of “intellectual conversion” after *Insight*, recognizing that this is true of reality is part of what he has in mind.

Self-appropriation means understanding ourselves as part of a process that we continue by our own activity.

*But the emphasis here is on the fact that if we come to know and understand ourselves as operating within the universe, as participating in the operation of the universe, in a particular fashion, that that knowledge effects how we are going to act, what we’re going to will.* So the kernels of Lonergan’s ethics, at least in the context of *Insight*, are being set forth here.

And then he says this rather remarkable thing

**“It is in virtue of that reach”,** the reach of our intellectual development, **“not only that man can know the universe but also that the universe can bring forth its own unity in the concentrated form of a single intelligent view.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 544).

## **2. Unity of the Human and the Universe**

**“It is in virtue of that reach not only that man can know the universe but also that the universe can bring forth its own unity in the concentrated form of a single intelligent view.”**  
(*CWL 3*, p. 544, emphases added).

Let me read the whole passage, embracing [pp. 543 to 544](#). So the whole passage begins with the remark:

**“We have been exploring the traditional metaphysical theme of being and unity.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 543).

And after talking about the parts that he has gone through, he says:

**Finally, intelligibility”** of the human **“may be material or spiritual: material intelligibility either consists in the merely empirical multiplicity and difference of prime potency or else is conditioned intrinsically by it; *in contrast, spiritual intelligibility is comprehensive; its reach is the universe of being; and it is in virtue of that reach not only that man can know the universe but also that the universe can bring forth its own unity in the***

*concentrated form of a single intelligent view.” (CWL 3, p. 544, emphases added).*

Now, what do you think he is getting at with that? That the human capacity for understanding is unrestricted. We'll go back and look at what he means by 'material' and 'spiritual' in a minute. But in the development of the human, the “*universe can bring forth its own unity in the concentrated form of a single intelligent view.*” (CWL 3, p. 544). What do you think he means by this? ... Tim?

Tim: Is he kind of pushing on the idea of man being a microcosm of the universe, in the sense of man — the universe isn't something out there that we're trying to find the unity of; in a sense our own development advances, develops, anticipates, and brings about that unity?

Pat: Ahm, yes, *That our own development brings about the unity of the universe. That's right! That's what he's saying!* How can that be? What — How can it be that the development of human beings brings about the unity of the whole universe? ... Greg?

Greg: Isn't it — or at least, it struck me as related to that passage we read in the chapter on finality. We talked about — It's in human consciousness that finality, or at least this upward and indeterminate movement, becomes self-conscious, becomes aware of itself.

Pat: Right! So — That's right!

Greg: So not only are we realizing our own potential but in realizing that, we are kind of bringing about this next step in the emergent probability of the universe. So we're kind of plugged into this much more universal movement towards finality.

Pat: Exactly! Exactly! And furthermore, where did human development come from? So Greg emphasized the fact of a completion, but where did human development come from?

Student: One of a series of viewpoints that led up to higher genera.

Pat: So the higher genera?

Student: Yeah.

Pat: Right! *So human beings come in the midst of this process that we saw a few moments ago when we were talking about the unity of the universe, human beings are part of the universe figuring out the solution to the multiplicity and the difference and the problem posed by the merely coincidental of the universe. Human beings emerge in it, but human beings have the unique capacity to think out intelligible forms that don't yet exist, and put them into effect.*

The human capacity to do specifically intelligent organizing of the potency of the universe is the addition of a way of the universe organizing itself. So it's in us that the universe takes, so to speak, a formal leap towards its bringing about its unity. That this passage:

**“spiritual intelligibility is comprehensive; its reach is the universe of being; and it is in virtue of that reach not only that man can know the universe but also that the universe can bring forth its own unity in the concentrated form of a single intelligent view.”** (CWL 3, p. 544).

This passage, as far as I can tell, is the one and only place that Lonergan makes a strong claim about some kind of unity of the universe, bringing forth its own unity. Notice he didn't say that in the section on the unity of the universe. The big emphasis was on the potentiality. *But it's in human beings, because of our unrestricted capacity for understanding that the possibility of a true solution to the challenges set by the potency of the universe can be met! It's a really remarkable thing! This is what Lonergan means by metaphysics.*

You all got that from ploughing your way through this chapter, right?

[Class amusement]

I ploughed my way through it a number of times before I started to catch these things

*But I think that this is really a fundamental part of what Lonergan has seen as metaphysics! There is this radical challenge! When Lonergan talks about intellectual conversion after *Insight*, it doesn't frequently come to light that this is part of what he means. That intellectual conversion means recognizing ourselves as *partici* — as the products of a*

*process which we continue with a certain kind of hope about a unity that is going to come about through our own activity.*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. and *The Divine Milieu*.

Fred Lawrence once asked Lonergan what he meant by metaphysics, and he responded that what he meant can also be found in *The Divine Milieu*.

Teilhard de Chardin was a twentieth century Jesuit scholar, paleontologist, scientist, and mystic.

Lonergan's metaphysics was epitomized by Teilhard's book, *The Divine Milieu*.

Teilhard endeavored to explain how he had come to understand the harmony of science and Christian faith.

How Teilhard's reception in theological and scientific circles influenced Lonergan.

Teilhard's project was to show that human actions matter, despite our seemingly minor place in the universe.

“In each of us the whole history of the world ... is in part reflected.”

We both “make our own souls” and also contribute to a much larger ‘opus’ of the universe.

Human actions are enduring *because* they participate in the divine will.

The finality of universe becomes conscious in us, and the universe is completed in our actions.

Lonergan took up Teilhard's project of showing the relation of humanity to finality and unity of the universe, but he based it upon self-appropriation rather than harmony with the divine will.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

*The Divine Milieu*

(1927-1957)

Everything that I know about Lonergan that is worth knowing, I either learned from Father Flanagan or from Fred Lawrence — Or *almost* everything, I should say — an awful lot! So this is another Fred Lawrence thing. When we were — I was going to Fred obviously because this is the area of the book that I find the most challenging at this point in my life. And Fred said that in his last years Lonergan complained that nobody was doing metaphysics. And there was a certain part of us that wanted to say “Well, it’s your fault!”

[Student laughter]

“To deal with metaphysics after the way in which you reoriented philosophy, who wants to do metaphysics anymore?!” But *Lonergan obviously thought something terribly important was the case about metaphysics*. And so Fred asked him: “Well, what do you mean by metaphysics?” And Lonergan, somewhat surprisingly to all of us, said:

“Well, it’s in *The Divine Milieu!*<sup>12</sup> In *The Divine Milieu*, that’s what I’m talking about; that’s my metaphysics!”

And like myself, Fred was kind of scratching his head about that one!

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<sup>12</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, trans. Sion Cowell, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

So in preparation for this class, my light reading over the Spring Break was *The Divine Milieu*; which was actually not that difficult to read compared with chapter sixteen (CWL 3, “*Metaphysics as Science*” (CWL 3, pp. 512-552).

It seems that Pierre Teilhard de Chardin<sup>13</sup> — Some of you know who he was, many of you perhaps don't — He was a Jesuit priest; he was a paleontologist and geologist; and he was actually on the expedition that discovered the Peking Man,<sup>14</sup> back in the nineteen-twenties. He was over in China, and they discovered this fossil of a hominid, which I think at that time was the oldest hominid that had been discovered. But he was also — I think the right word for him is that he was a mystic! He — Lonergan once said of Voegelin<sup>15</sup> that “what it takes for

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<sup>13</sup> **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin** SJ (1881–1955) was a French philosopher and Jesuit priest who trained as a paleontologist and geologist and took part in the discovery of Peking Man. He conceived the idea of the *Omega Point* (a maximum level of complexity and consciousness towards which he believed the universe was evolving) and developed Vladimir Vernadsky's concept of *noosphere*. Although many of Teilhard's writings were censored by the Catholic Church during his lifetime because of his views on original sin, Teilhard has been posthumously praised by Pope Benedict XVI and other eminent Catholic figures, and his theological teachings were cited by Pope Francis in the 2015 encyclical, *Laudato si*.

<sup>14</sup> **Peking man**, extinct hominin of the species *Homo erectus*, known from fossils found at Zhoukoudian near Beijing. Peking man was identified as a member of the human lineage by Davidson Black in 1927 on the basis of a single tooth. Later excavations yielded several skullcaps and mandibles, facial and limb bones, and the teeth of about 40 individuals. Evidence suggests that the Zhoukoudian fossils date from about 770,000 to 230,000 years ago. Before being assigned to *H. erectus*, they were variously classified as *Pithecanthropus* and *Sinanthropus*.

<sup>15</sup> **Eric Voegelin** (1901–1985) was a German-born American political philosopher. He was born in Cologne, and educated in political science at the University of Vienna, at which he became an associate professor of political science at the Faculty of Law. In 1938 he and his wife fled from the Nazi forces which had entered Vienna, and emigrated to the United States, where they became citizens in 1944. He spent most of his academic career at the University of Notre Dame, Louisiana State University, the University of Munich and the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. Voegelin worked throughout his life to account for the endemic political violence of the twentieth century, in an effort variously referred to as a philosophy of politics, history, or consciousness. In Voegelin's *Weltanschauung*, he “blamed a flawed utopian interpretation of Christianity for spawning totalitarian movements like Nazism and Communism.” Voegelin eschewed any ideological labels or categorizations that readers and followers attempted to impose on his work. Voegelin published scores of books, essays, and reviews in his lifetime. An early work was *Die politischen Religionen* (1938; *The Political Religions*), on totalitarian ideologies as political religions due to their structural similarities to religion. He wrote the multi-volume

Me”, Lonergan, — “*what I have to come at by analysis, Voegelin gets immediately by intuition.*” *I think you could say that about Teilhard also. There’s something about the mystic who apprehends things about reality in a very immediate fashion.* And most of my reading of Teilhard is an appreciation for the mystical vision that he had of the whole, and it shows up in *The Divine Milieu*. Now the word ‘milieu’ means “the locus, or setting, or the environment, within which something develops.”

## **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

### *The Divine Milieu*

(1927-1957)

Milieu: “The locus, setting, environment, in which something develops.”

“What will count, what will always endure is this: that you have acted in all things *conformably* to the will of God”

“It expresses vigorously the primary worth of the divine will which ... becomes for Christians ... a sort of unique *milieu*, unchanging beneath the diversity and number of tasks which, as men and woman we have to do ...”

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(English-language) *Order and History*, which began publication in 1956 and remained incomplete at the time of his death twenty-nine years later. His 1951 Charles Walgreen lectures, published as *The New Science of Politics*, is sometimes seen as a prolegomenon to this series, and remains his best known work. He left many manuscripts unpublished, including a history of political ideas, which has since been published in eight volumes.

And this is what Teilhard says when he is explaining what he means by the phrase, “the divine milieu”: “What will count, up there, what will always endure, is this: that you have acted in all things conformably to the will of God.”<sup>16</sup>

Now Lonergan is clearly not doing theology, and he’s not a mystic. *He’s doing philosophy here; it’s a philosophy grounded in self-knowledge!* And Teilhard is a religious writer, from the beginning to the end, *that’s what he* talked about. But Lonergan was also aware of the fact that Teilhard ran into certain kinds of difficulties. One of the difficulties he ran into — The difficulties that he ran into all had to do with the problem of evil. Within the Jesuit and Catholic communities, it seemed as though he was saying that original sin was necessary. *I think that the proper way to interpret Teilhard is to say: “Look, he’s not doing systematic theology, he’s being a mystic! And you have to read him as a mystic!”* But nevertheless, his writings were suppressed for about thirty, thirty-five years, partly for that reason; but also probably because he was doing a radically new way of thinking about the relationship between the universe known by modern science — and he was a modern scientist — and the universe as known through the traditional approaches of metaphysics and a metaphysically grounded theology. The other group that he tended to get into trouble with was scientists, who thought that what he was saying really wasn’t grounded in science; that it was just wild speculation.

But he got a very profound reception, especially in the late nineteen fifties, and the nineteen sixties, and the early nineteen seventies, by people who were yearning for someone who could put together *the dimensions of their spiritual lives* and their *seriousness about modern science*. And I was certainly one of the people that was really very much taken up by that. But he was writing in a way that, first of all, raised problems about: “how can this be scientific, this is just mystical!” And raised problems in other ways that had difficulties for Christian doctrine.

Lonergan didn’t know about Teilhard — I don’t know when he read Teilhard’s works, but he certainly knew in his formation about the difficulties Teilhard ran into; and he wasn’t

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<sup>16</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, trans. Sion Cowell, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), p. 11.

going to repeat them. And yet *he clearly had this deep esteem for Teilhard in his metaphysical vision*. There's a remark about Teilhard in *Method in Theology*;<sup>17</sup> there's nothing in *Insight* about him.

So Teilhard is talking, not metaphysically; he's not talking about self-appropriation; *he's talking about the will of God*. Lonergan will talk about the will of God when we get to chapter nineteen (*CWL* 3, “**General Transcendent Knowledge**”, pp. 657-708) and to chapter twenty (*CWL* 3, “**Special Transcendent Knowledge**”, pp. 709-751), but not until then. So *Lonergan is working out what he sees to be a vision of the unity of the universe that picks up what he thinks is authentic in Teilhard, but does it in a way that avoids the pitfalls that Teilhard himself got into*.

Teilhard writes as follows: “It” — and what he means by ‘it’ here is the will of God, or actually rather this remark *that we’ve seen, namely*: “What will count, up there, what will always endure, is this: that you have acted in all things conformably to the will of God.”<sup>18</sup>

“It expresses vigorously the primary worth of the divine will which ... becomes for Christians .... a sort of unique *milieu*, unchanging beneath the diversity and plurality of human tasks, in which [as men and woman we have to do, and in which] we can place ourselves without ever having to leave.”<sup>19</sup>

*So Teilhard was concerned to provide — in this book, he was concerned to provide a vision that met the problem of feeling like we’re just infinitesimal pieces in an overwhelmingly large universe. What he wanted to do was to provide a vision that showed to people that everything that they did mattered; and that everything that they did was a*

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<sup>17</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972), p. 315: “It has been the great merit of Teilhard de Chardin to have recognized the Christian’s need of a coherent image of himself in his world and to have contributed not a little towards meeting that need.”

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, trans. Sion Cowell, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, trans. Sion Cowell, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), p. 12.

*participation in the divine will!* Which is as you can see one of the reasons for which he might have got him into trouble with people who were not on the same level.<sup>20</sup>

**Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

*The Divine Milieu*

(1927-1957)

“Where are the roots of our being?...

“*He makes his own soul* throughout all his earthly days; and at the same time he collaborates in another work ...”

And so Teilhard asks this:

“Where are the roots of our being? In the first place they plunge down into the unfathomable past. How great is the mystery of the first cells which were one day animated by the breath of our souls! What an indecipherable synthesis of successive influences in which we are forever incorporated! In every one of us, through matter, the whole history of the world is partially reflected.”<sup>21</sup>

So that sense that Lonergan had that *the universe is being completed in our actions* is something that resonates with what Teilhard is saying here.

“However autonomous our soul, it is indebted to an inheritance worked upon from all sides — before ever it came into being — by the totality of the energies of the earth: it meets and rejoins

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<sup>20</sup> The final words of this sentence are rather inaudible on the tape, and the inserted eight words are merely conjectures by the transcriber.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, trans. Sion Cowell, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), p. 17.

life at a determined level. Then, hardly has it entered actively into the universe at that particular point, than it feels, in its turn, besieged and penetrated by the flow of cosmic influences which have to be ordered and assimilated.”<sup>22</sup>

And then on the next page he says this:

“We make our own soul throughout our earthly lives; and at the same time we collaborate in another work, in another *opus*, which infinitely transcends, while at the same time it narrowly determines, the perspectives of our individual achievement: the completing of the world.”<sup>23</sup>

So what **Teilhard** is expressing in a very specifically Christian religious context, and doing on the basis of his own mystical inspirations, that either resonates or doesn't resonate with the readers, **Lonergan** saw would be possible to do on the basis of the self-appropriation and the working out of some very traditional metaphysical ideas on a much deeper and much more rigorously worked out basis.

*But the metaphysical vision of Lonergan I think is very much there with Teilhard, that the finality of the universe becomes conscious in us, and by being conscious in us makes it possible for the unity of the universe to find its completion and its wholeness. What that will be we don't know! How it will come to pass will be by each of us exercising our own authenticity; which is to say, following the lead of our intellectual, and reasonable, and evaluative, and loving, inquiry.*

With that, we will stop for today. Okay, thank you!

## **End of Part Two of Class Twenty-One.**

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<sup>22</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, trans. Sion Cowell, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, trans. Sion Cowell, (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), p. 18.