

Insight & Beyond

Class 24, Part 1: March 31st 2010

“From Below Upwards & Above Downwards”

Chapter 17 §3: “Truth of Interpretation”

Summary of Material

Regarding the notion of truth — a notion, not an idea or a concept or a cultural tradition about truth.

People already *have* a notion of truth — that truth is when what a person says is really so.

But we cannot ‘look’ at reality to see if it corresponds to what we say; our ideas about the real are always mediated; they never immediately access the real; hence the need for reasonable reflection.

Truth is implicit in the discussion of the notion of being, because the only reasonable affirmation is true affirmation, and truth is the relation between knowing and being. (*CWL* 3, p. 575).

Making explicit what is only implicit in this section: in God the knowing and the known are *identical*, so Truth is God.

For humans, truths are *correspondences* between the knowing and being.

Discussion of the criticisms of some correspondence theories of truth.

Lonergan's brief discussion of truth needs elaboration in relation to other theories of truth.

Return to a topic remaining from the previous class:

“Two dynamisms” — the dynamism of the unrestricted desire, and the dynamism of unconditional love.

One a movement from below upwards, the
other a movement from above
downwards.

The dynamisms move us beyond anything we have attained so far.

The desire to know, value and love moves us towards ever further insights, judgments of fact and value, decisions and acts of loving.

Unconditional love is a principle — a source of further activities — of new decisions, new judgments of fact and value, new insights, new experiences.

No proof that this second dynamism or principle is the source of conscious acts; Lonergan puts it forth for consideration by the self-appropriating subject.

This is the only ‘proof’ that there is a second dynamism (or the first, for that matter).

Loving is the source of acts of valuing.

Acts of believing (whether of judgments of fact or value) come out of our valuing.

Believing can be prior to understanding, and give rise to acts of understanding what one first believes is inspired by loving and valuing.

New acts of understanding can help us experience things we would not otherwise notice.

This is the dynamism of love, from above downwards, as a source of further conscious acts.

Only insofar as love is truly unrestricted does it make sense to speak of *knowledge* as born of love.

Faith: Knowledge of fact and knowledge of value can be born of love.

People in love are often very biased; but this is not truly unconditional love. It is an extremely limited, narcissistic love.

Genuine love of a person or a community is a participation in unconditional love; it is not jingoism.

Student question of whether true love is a way to break bias.

Yes. Lonergan elaborates this in his essay “Healing and Creating in History.” Max Scheler in his book *Ressentiment* [a reply to Nietzsche] discusses how love can reverse *ressentiment*.

Common sense is not up to the challenge of overcoming general bias. Something from outside is needed, and that something is the dynamic from above downward that proceeds from unconditional love.

Student question about whether the upward and downward movements are simultaneous or alternative ways of knowing.

These movements are different from the scissors metaphor that Lonergan uses in the case of the scientific methods.

In the scissors metaphor, the upper blade comes from prior intellectual achievements.

The dynamism from above downward that is guided by love, on the other hand, does not depend upon prior intellectual achievements. It will use intellectual achievements to give further guidance and clarification, but does not primarily depend upon these.

Yet the insights and judgments that proceed from above downward will be the same as from below upward, provided the realm in question is proportionate being.

Student question about whether going along with something that a beloved loves (e.g., hockey) out of love for them is enough, or whether one also has to come to love what they love.

One comes to love what the beloved values out of that love.

Analogously, out of love of God, one can come to love all that God loves — which is the love of everything about everything.

Religious traditions bequeath good insights and judgments that help comprehend religious experience.

Student question about how the movement from above downward affects the levels of systems.

The way Lonergan speaks of higher integrations of lower levels of events does hold when one gets to the level of unconditional being in love — there is some sort of higher integration that takes place. Although it is different in some ways.

Student questions about religious development as dialectical — authenticity and inauthenticity as the tension between the self-as-transcending and the self-as-transcended. Whether self-surrender is *to* the self, or *of* the self.

The self-as-transcended is not necessarily inauthentic. It is the self up until the present, constituted by the experiences, insights, judgments, decisions one has made so far.

But there is a strong desire to stay that way, and a strong fear of giving up what one has made of oneself so far. A strong resistance against self-surrender.

Inauthenticity is giving in to that resistance and refusing self-surrender in response to love or to the desire to understand, know, value, decide more.

Further question about what is meant by self-surrender — what giving it up to?

The problem is that this is unknown at the moment of the decision of self-surrender.

Example of college students who have to give up dreams for careers that they had when coming to college. Sometimes giving up one's own dreams for the sake of the dreams of a beloved.

Does God compromise as human lovers do? The very being of God is self-surrender, according to most world religions.

Lonergan on Interpretation in *Insight*.

He will claim that the method of metaphysics holds the key to interpretation.

Just as the method of metaphysics anticipates the distortions that produce a dialectic in the history of metaphysics, so also he regards his method of interpretation (hermeneutics) as based in his metaphysics as capable of dealing with the distortions of meaning and problems of interpretation that permeate the history of human meanings.

First among the problems of interpretation is that of relativism.

What is meant by “relativism” in interpretation?

Discussion — individual and cultural relativism; whether there is any objective standard for interpretation.

Thomas Kuhn moved the problem of relativism from interpretation in the humanities into the realm of the natural sciences as well.

These are different from the relativism due to biases.

Lonergan claims that, under proper conditions, objective interpretation is possible.

Lonergan’s response to the problem of relativism in interpretation is his “universal viewpoint.”

Method of interpretation as having to do with discovering significance of an expression that goes beyond the horizon of the one who articulated the expression.

Interpretation as a creative activity that brings forward meanings that the originator of a text might not recognize.

Interpretation understands history as better than it really was. The converted person operating in the functional specialty, Dialectics, “develops positions and reverses counter-positions, [and] will be presenting an idealized version of the past, something better than was the reality.” (*CWL 14, Method in Theology*, p. 236).

“Explanatory (or scientific) interpretation” does this by situating expressions of meaning in the context of sequences of genetic developments and dialectical reversals.

Student question about whether interpretation “reads too much into the text” instead of what the author really intended

Ambiguity of what the author “really intended.” In every act of meaning, humans intend beyond the finitude of that act.

The ideal of what is “really intended *in the text*” can be under the influence of the

counter-position of the already-out-there-now conception of meaning

A human meaning is never just static; it is always already on the way to richer meaning or more decadent meaning — or both at the same time in different ways.

Modern methods of interpretation (Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, post-modern) bring to light important dynamics of meaning; but they can also become monolithic and obscure the richness of meaning.

Student question about Lonergan's "ultimate viewpoint."

Corrective regarding the difference between an "ultimate viewpoint" vs. Lonergan's "universal viewpoint."

The limited universal viewpoint is only heuristic. Not a complete account of all meaning; rather, a structured anticipation of all meanings.

Further question: Is the ground of the universal viewpoint the unrestricted desire to know or unconditional love?

Lonergan does not spell out the way unconditional love can be the ground of a universal viewpoint until *Method in Theology*. Briefly discussed.

In *Insight*, however, Lonergan attempts to work out the universal viewpoint solely on the basis of the first dynamism of the unrestricted desire to know.

Student question about whether the quest for the historical Jesus was a motivating factor in Lonergan's thought about interpretation.

The quest for the historical Jesus was only part of a larger set of issues of history and theology that motivated Lonergan.

End of Part One.

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From Below Upwards & Above Downwards;

Chapter 17 §3: Truth of Interpretation.

Chapter 18: The Possibility of Ethics.

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But we cannot ‘look’ at reality to see if it corresponds to what we say; our ideas about the real are always mediated; they never immediately access the real; hence the need for reasonable reflection.

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Making explicit what is only implicit in this section: in God the knowing and the known are *identical*, so Truth is God.

For humans, truths are *correspondences* between the knowing and being.

Discussion of the criticisms of some correspondence theories of truth.

Lonergan's brief discussion of truth needs elaboration in relation to other theories of truth.

In today's class we're going to focus on Section three of Chapter Seventeen of *Insight*, which is called "The Truth of Interpretation" (*CWL* 3, pp. 585-617), skipping over what for many people might be the most important question in the whole book, namely "**The Notion of Truth**" (*CWL* 3, pp. 572-585). So I thought of this today: I didn't want to *entirely* skip over it! ... As is often the case for many things that Lonergan treats, things that vexed many, many, people don't seem to vex Lonergan in quite the same way.

So if you want to look on page 573:

"The proximate criterion of truth is reflective grasp of the virtually unconditioned." (*CWL* 3, p. 573).

And then if you want to flick over to section 2.2, page 575:

"The definition of truth was introduced implicitly in our account of the notion of being. For being was identified with what is to be known through intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation; but the only reasonable affirmation is the true affirmation; and so being is what is known truly. Inversely, then, knowing is true by its relation to being, and truth is a relation of knowing to being." (*CWL* 3, p. 575).

And so is everybody ... ?

[Some bemusement in class]

To parse that just very briefly: there's a background assumption about the word 'truth', which is why Lonergan, as he so frequently does, entitles this second subsection of the chapter, "**The Notion of Truth**" (CWL 3, pp. 572-585, emphasis added); which is to say that *people have notions about truth. And there are notions that you might say are culturally conditioned, and then there are the deeper notions that are the notions that we have by way of anticipation.*

And implicitly what Lonergan is getting at here is that at least one, perhaps arguably the prevailing notion of truth, is that *what we say represents the real*. The word 'represents' is the big problem there! And *Lonergan, of course, doesn't use the word 'represent'!* Instead what he says is that the notion of truth was introduced implicitly when we talked about the notion of being: that being is what is to be known by judgment, affirmative judgment, grounded in the grasp of the virtually unconditioned. So true judgment is judgment about what really is so! And judgment about what really is so — Let me reverse that:

We know that judgment is about what really is so, not by taking a look at reality, and then looking to see if our propositions correspond to it. *Because that's impossible! Any type of an intuition, or apprehension, or idea, about the real, is already a mediated idea about the real; so we don't have immediate access to the real! What we have is the mediated access to the real that is genuine and full in so far as we make judgments about what is so, that are reasonable, which is to say grounded in the grasp of the virtually unconditioned. So truth has to do with the notion of being, because that's what the notion of truth is anticipating.*

Now, he makes a very interesting comment that follows up on the passages that I just read; that in the limit there's an identity between truth — that truth is an identity between knowing and known! Which has got to strike us as puzzling at this point!

To lift the veil from that puzzling remark, he is thinking about God: that in God, the knowing and the known are identical; and so truth is an identity in the knowing of God. But here he just simply puts it as a limit concept, so to speak. And since for human beings our knowledge is not an identity with being, that means that there is some other kind of approximative

relationship between our knowing and being, approximative in the sense that we know something about being, but we don't know being in its totality. And so therefore the word that he's going to use here is a traditional word: "of correspondence." Now, the correspondence notion of truth has been roundly criticized, especially in modern and post-modern philosophy. But the basis for that criticism, from what I can tell, is almost always a criticism of a correspondence because of the bridge problem that crops up if one takes knowing to be representation. And since Lonergan doesn't take knowing to be representation, he doesn't run into that particular set of objections; but he also therefore doesn't mean by 'correspondence' the same. So to be explicit, 'correspondence', if the mode of knowing is representation, is the problem of a correspondence between a representation and the represented; but that presupposes an independent access to the represented that doesn't involve any representation. And so the notion of truth as correspondence falls victim to a very obvious line of criticism.

Now, I don't mean to exhaust this topic in any way by these remarks. The fact of the matter, as with several of the chapters and even several of the sections in *Insight*, they deserve a Course unto themselves. Maybe some day I will consider taking on the challenge of a Course on Truth, and situate Lonergan with regard to the major discussions of truth. That's not something we're going to do today, or this semester. But I just — I'm really just saying that to unpack what

Lonergan is doing in this section on truth [**“The Notion of Truth”** (*CWL* 3, pp. 572-585)], and especially to unpack what he says about the appropriation of truth is more than can reasonably be done in this class-room in this semester. And so rather than attempt to do an inadequate job of it, I’m just going to point to it, and move on! Obviously, there’s rich material here for term papers, if not dissertations, or for a series of monographs.

Return to a topic remaining from the previous class:

“Two dynamisms” — the dynamism of the unrestricted desire, and the dynamism of unconditional love.

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The dynamisms move us beyond anything we have attained so far.

The desire to know, value and love moves us towards ever further insights, judgments of fact and value, decisions and acts of loving.

Unconditional love is a principle — a source of further activities — of new decisions, new judgments of fact and value, new insights, new experiences.

No proof that this second dynamism or principle is the source of conscious acts; Lonergan puts it forth for consideration by the self-appropriating subject.

This is the only ‘proof’ that there is a second dynamism (or the first, for that matter).

So having said that, the first thing I wanted to do was to finish up a remark from our last class which I didn’t have time to get to. And it has to do with what I referred to last time as the two dynamisms. So you remember that Lonergan refers to being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion as a dynamism. And it is a distinct dynamism from the dynamism that we’ve been talking about all year, namely the dynamism of the *desire* to know. When we move outside of *Insight*, and Lonergan becomes aware of, clearly aware of, the distinctness of a *fourth level of*

consciousness, and a fourth — what he's going to call — transcendental notion, when he does that, the unrestricted desire to know is more properly characterized as an unrestricted desire to know, to choose, and to love; or, as I like to say, an unrestricted desire to know, to value, to choose, and to love. That's the dynamism that we've been familiarized with by the study over the past — I guess it's now about twenty-three weeks.

Two Dynamisms

Levels of Consciousness

Fifth Level?	Loving
Responsibility	Judging Values and Choosing ?Questions? Is it worthwhile?
Reasonableness	Judging Facts ?Questions? Is it so?
Intelligence	Understanding ?Questions? What, Why, How, Where, when?
Experience	Experiencing

But he introduces the category of **religious experience** as the basic fulfilment of *self-transcendence*; and by self-transcendence he means the way in which we go beyond the constitution of ourselves through the *unrestricted desire to know, to value, to choose, and to love*. So by going beyond in desiring, we are already — even though the desire for what we see is not yet fulfilled — even by the desiring, we have moved beyond what we have attained; we're in a state of tension, we're in a state that Eric Voegelin in his many works refers to as the *metaxy*: the Greek term that he takes out of Plato, meaning *the in-between, the tension of being in-between: in between what we have become, and what we are not-yet. To be human is to be in that tension, in that desiring towards what we have not yet.*

Lonergan introduces the category of religious experience by relating it to our *unrestricted desire to know, to value, to choose, and to love*. He relates it to our unrestricted self-transcending desire by saying it's "**the basic fulfilment.**" Well, *if it's the basic fulfilment, then it's not the same as the desire! It's a strange terminology, because a basic fulfilment is not a full fulfilment. He also refers to it as "the proper fulfilment", but it's not really a full fulfilment!* And we talked last week about *the fact that this basic fulfilment doesn't answer all questions, and indeed gives rise to more questions. It's a new kind of experience. Remember Lonergan says that the dynamic state of religious experience is just consciousness; it's the presence of ourselves to ourselves in a dramatically different way than we're present to ourselves on any of the other activities, in any of the other activities that we perform, that we've become familiar with. And by being present to ourselves in this new and distinctive way, that means that we have a new experience of ourselves; we are given to ourselves in a new way that elicits new kinds of questions.* So clearly, the basic fulfilment is not the full fulfilment: it doesn't obliterate or do away with the unrestricted desire to know; and indeed it intensifies it, pushes it even further, and gives it a renewed energy and impetus! So whatever this basic fulfilment experience is, it is not identical with the desire, the unrestricted desire! And yet Lonergan refers to it as a 'dynamism'.

So to just finish that discussion, I want to draw your attention to a terminology that Lonergan uses even after *Method in Theology* in 1972, the terminology of "**the movement from below upwards and the movement from above downwards**": metaphors of course! So the movement from below upwards is the one that we are already familiar with. And I'm using the red arrow here to echo the questions that occur on the various levels, or that move us from one level to another, that move our self-transcendence from one level of consciousness to the other.

So the arrow representing a certain kind of unity, in the sense that our unrestricted desire is really unrestricted; our questions for intelligence, however good our answers, or however conclude our answers on the level of intelligence, the desire is not satisfied by them.

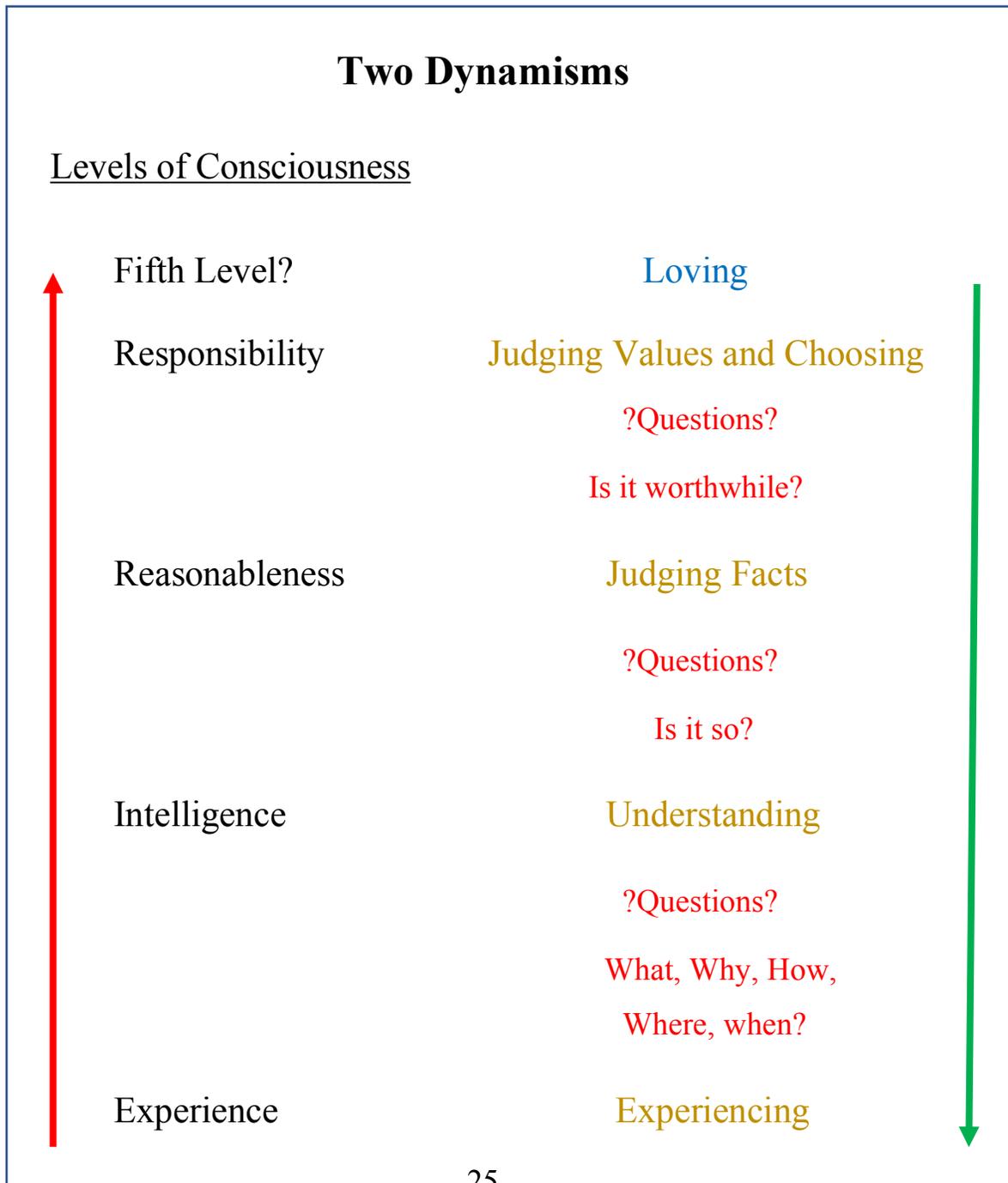
Two Dynamisms

Levels of Consciousness



In his post *Insight* writings, Lonergan comes to realize that however complete our answers to questions for judgment, questions about what is, however complete those answers are, our unrestricted desire is not satisfied with those either, and moves ever beyond by desiring

more. It just wants more! And so *the unrestricted desire is the movement from below upward.* What is distinctive and unique in Lonergan's thought, and something that Lonergan not only observes, but recognizes the profound implications of, is that just the very fact that our consciousness is structured by our inquiring, has all kinds of important implications; many of which he's been working out in his sections on *Metaphysics*. So there's a dynamism from below-upwards!



*But there is also a dynamism from above-downwards! It's a dynamism that begins in love. And as he puts it in *Method in Theology*: he says that love establishes a new horizon within which we operate. It becomes a new principle. Now the word 'principle' often means a proposition, such as the principles of geometry, or the principles of algebra, or the principles of physics, or the principles of chemistry; 'principle' often means a proposition or a set of propositions from which we derive certain things. Lonergan always made a big deal when he was lecturing of saying "'principle' means first". It comes from the Latin term, *principium*, for what is first; and it translates the Greek term *Arxé*, meaning what is first. What is first for Lonergan of course is not the propositions, but the source of propositions. And in the movement from below upwards, *what precedes or is more originary, or more primary, what is the real principle of propositions is the questions that give rise to the insights which the propositions express. And what is more originary is the questions which turn bright ideas into true and unconditional assertions.* Only then do you have principles in the more familiar sense of true propositions. But the "principle of principles" — which is a *term* that Aristotle uses at the end of the *Posterior Analytics* — *the principle of principles is the unrestricted desire to know, to value, to choose, and to love.**

Principle in that sense is what Lonergan means by the other dynamism. That love becomes another principle in the sense of what's first in a series of further activities. So just as the desire to know is what's first in a whole series of selectivity of our experiencing, for the sake of having insights into our experiencing, for the sake of having judgments about the truth of our insights into our experiencing, for the sake of — we know so that we have the kind of conditions that we need for living rightly and living well! The unrestricted being in love, religious experience, functions also as a principle in that sense, as the source of activities.

And there is here really no proof that this is so. What Lonergan does is to put forth for our consideration whether or not there is anything in our experience, in our conscious acting, that corresponds to this second movement, this second type of principle. Is it the case, as Lonergan argues, that when you fall in love, it gives rise to judgments of value? When you fall in love, do you value what your beloved values? When you fall in love do you go to sporting events that you otherwise would have shunned, because they are loved by your beloved? Do you

go to ballets and operas because your beloved loves them? Do you come to love the parents of your beloved? Do you come to love the movies and the books and the places that are especially fond to your beloved? *That's the beginning of this further dynamism!* And if that is the case, are there judgments of value, and judgments of fact, that come from that value? *For those of you who have come to love philosophy because some person, whether a teacher or a peer, inspired you; out of admiration for that person, you came to value philosophy, or you came to value theology, or you came to value biology or mathematics, out of the inspiration? Did that give rise to judgments of fact that this is worth pursuing?*

Loving is the source of acts of valuing.

Acts of believing (whether of judgments of fact or value)
come out of our valuing.

Believing can be prior to understanding, and give rise to
acts of understanding what one first believes is inspired
by loving and valuing.

New acts of understanding can help us experience things
we would not otherwise notice.

This is the dynamism of love, from above downwards, as
a source of further conscious acts.

So this gets us into this area that was asked about earlier, and we'll come to later on in this semester, *believing*. *Our believing is born of our judgments of value! Our judgements about factual things as well as our judgments about value things, are born of our believing; but our believing is rooted in our valuing, our valuing of the worthwhileness of accepting the testimony of others, and ultimately the testimony of others out of love!* And once one believes — for example, if you come to believe that a statement that Socrates makes in the *Gorgias* and elsewhere that *it is better to suffer injustice rather than to do injustice* (Plato, *Gorgias*, see 469b); *if you come to value that, and you come to believe that that is true, you are then impelled to try to understand what the heck that means!* *So there is a movement in which people tend to believe*

such things before they understand them! And out of the valuing and the judging of those things as true, seek to understand them. And lastly, because of their understanding, notice in the ground of sensation and memory, elements that they would not have otherwise noticed.

So the dynamism from above downwards gives rise to a series of activities in exactly reciprocal fashion to the movement from below upwards. And this is what Lonergan means by the second dynamism, or the religious experience as dynamic. I used the human example that when you fall in love with somebody it gives rise to judgments of value; those judgments of value give rise to judgments of fact, which give rise to insights which give rise to new experiences, new 'noticings'.

Only insofar as love is truly unrestricted does it make sense to speak of *knowledge* as born of love.

Faith: Knowledge of fact and knowledge of value can be born of love.

People in love are often very biased; but this is not truly unconditional love. It is an extremely limited, narcissistic love.

Genuine love of a person or a community is a participation in unconditional love; it is not jingoism.

The key thing in this of course is the condition, or the stipulation, that this is a basic or a proper fulfilment of the unrestricted desire; which means that the experience that Lonergan is calling religious experience has to itself be unconditional and unrestricted! Only for that reason, only in so far as one's love is truly unrestrictive, does it make any sense to say that there is such a thing as knowledge born of love!

So you read that chapter four in *Method in Theology* (CWL 14: pp. 96-120, "Religion"); we didn't go over it in class. *When he gives his account of faith, he says it's knowledge born of love; knowledge of value and knowledge of fact that's born of love.* Now, we all know that people in love can be among the most biased people in the world. They overlook the faults of

their beloveds, they ignore all sorts of things. *They are so caught up with defending and possessing their beloved, that they ignore all the further pertinent questions; that, my friends, is not unconditional love! That's extremely limited love!* It's love that borders on narcissism: not loving my beloved as he or she truly is, with all their warts and scars; *I'm loving the image that I've created out of myself of my beloved! So it's an extremely limited love. What makes this make any sense, if it does make sense to you, is the stipulation that religious experience, being in love in an unconditioned fashion, is the proper and basic fulfilment of the first dynamism in all its un-restrictedness!* Otherwise, this is just another form of bias.

I do want to add the proviso that I think that real and true love of another human being, or — another thing that Lonergan refers to is love of community, or love of nation — real and true love of a community of human beings, or a nation, can have the same power, because it participates in and shares in unconditional love. Now, genuine love of another person, and genuine love of a nation, and genuine love of a community, is not jingoism. It's not “my country right or wrong! And if you don't love it, leave it!” *That* would be a phrase back in the sixties when I was your age; wonderful period though it was!

[Some murmurs of amusement]

Real love of a community is not “love it or leave it!” In his book *Nixon Agonistes*,¹ Garry Wills has a rather remarkable comment, or a rather remarkable section, about Robert E. Lee, who made a very, very, difficult painful decision to become the Commander, to become General and then Commander of the Confederate Army, even though he was first of all violently opposed to the split of the Union of the United States, and also was not a supporter of slavery! He did it out of love of his people, with a certain kind of sobriety and awareness of the serious fallibility and the serious wrongs of the Confederacy. He did it because they were his people, and they needed him. And he went to their service even knowing the wrongfulness of a great deal of what they were involved in. And it's a very poignant meditation! People who take on service of their country, even when they know that there are things that are wrong, because there is a more profound good that love perceives; that the evils that people are involved in, and the evils that communities are involved in, do not of necessity, in and of themselves, depending on what kind of wrong it is, obliterate their belovedness. And there certainly are organizations and

¹ Garry Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man*, (New York, NY: Mariner Books, 2002).

groups of people where the only right and moral thing to do is to make the break. But it also can be the case that people respond to what's evil in a community, what's evil in another person, by still loving them and serving them out of that love.

Student question of whether true love is a way to break
bias.

Yes. Lonergan elaborates this in his essay
“Healing and Creating in History.” Max
Scheler in his book *Ressentiment* [a
reply to Nietzsche] discusses how love
can reverse *ressentiment*.

Common sense is not up to the challenge of
overcoming general bias. Something
from outside is needed, and that
something is the dynamic from above
downward that proceeds from
unconditional love.

Pat: Jeff?

Jeff: Oh, you actually kind of answered it. I was going to ask if you get to the full peak in like this true love, could it be a way to break bias? But, I think, that the example you gave pretty much answered that.

Pat: Yes. Yeah. That's — In one of [Lonergan's](#) later writings which I will try to incorporate into the end of this Course, a brief and deceptively simple [lecture](#), because compared to what you folks have been slogging through in the last couple of chapters on Metaphysics, it's very readable, and it's short! It's an essay called “Healing and Creating in History.”² And given it's simplicity, it looks like it's not a particularly profound piece of work.

² Bernard Lonergan, *CWL 16: A Third Collection*, “Healing and Creating in History”, pp. 94-103.

But in that — *It's a place where Lonergan talks explicitly — I think maybe for the first time — about this movement from below-upwards and from above-downwards. And the primary thing that he focusses on in the movement from above-downwards is the healing of biases. That being in love in an unrestricted fashion is a healing of biases.*

Maybe very concretely: if you always hated hockey, and your beloved loves hockey, and you start going to hockey games, and you begin to see in hockey games what your beloved saw; *there's a point when you come to recognize that there was some bias in you, with regard to your disposition towards hockey.* In his book *Ressentiment*,³ which is a reflection on Friedrich Nietzsche's reflections on *Ressentiment*, Max Scheler draws attention to the ways in which *ressentiment* arises in people *when they're confronted with a nobility or an ability that they are not capable of attaining.* So they share the points on — in *ressentiment*, you have two factors operating; *the first* is the spontaneous value recognition of the goodness, of the strong, of the noble, of the intelligent, of the fast, of the quick, of the beautiful, and so on; all of the things that Nietzsche identifies as the good, the good of the powerful. And that a person who doesn't have those, first of all has an inescapable recognition, felt recognition, of them as valuable; and **secondly**, at the same time a recognition of their inability to attain those. So impotence before the excellence of whatever value they are confronted with. The *ressentiment* results in the attempt, as Scheler says, to relieve the felt tension between the goodness that I encounter, and my own inability to rise to that or to attain that, or to possess that. *And so what ressentiment tends to do is to devalue the value to make the tension and the pain of the impotence less.*

And, you know, speaking very biographically, I was never much of an athlete! I was an intellectual, sort of. And there certainly were times in my life, which I hope I've now gotten beyond, there were definite times in my life when my attitude towards athletic prowess was a put-down. *And love is one of the things that overcomes the resentments that form the ground of the biases that we have about such things.* So, yes, it's a long-winded answer to your question, **Jeff**. So yes, *unrestricted love or being in love does have the power to heal biases, where the further pertinent questions that ought to have arisen and have become blocked, are overcome by a power that ordinary intelligence is not capable of overcoming.*

³ Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, edited by Lewis A. Coser, translated by William W. Holdheim. New York: Schocken. 1972.

Remember in his discussion of *cosmopolis* (CWL 3, pp. 263-267), *Loneragan* ends with that rather pessimistic comment about the possibilities of overcoming the general bias, that one would have to have accepted the correct philosophy rooted in self-appropriation, in order to really confront the longer cycle of decline that comes from the general bias; but common sense itself is not up to the task of overcoming the general bias that infects it. And so we're left with this kind of puzzling and disturbing ending to chapter seven in *Insight*. What *Loneragan* is anticipating is that he needs something else that comes from outside of common sense and indeed from outside of the upward dynamism. And the thing that he's anticipating is the second dynamism that moves from above downwards that will begin to heal the biases. So a good question.

Student question about whether the upward and downward movements are simultaneous or alternative ways of knowing.

These movements are different from the scissors metaphor that *Loneragan* uses in the case of the scientific methods.

In the scissors metaphor, the upper blade comes from prior intellectual achievements.

The dynamism from above downward that is guided by love, on the other hand, does not depend upon prior intellectual achievements. It will use intellectual achievements to give further guidance and clarification, but does not primarily depend upon these.

Yet the insights and judgments that proceed from above downward will be the same as from below upward, provided the realm in question is proportionate being.

Pat: Greg?

Greg: When we saw this for the first time with the scissors metaphor, if I remember here, the impression I had was that they were somewhat kind of simultaneous processes that kind of happened in conjoined fashion; whereas the way we're talking about it today seems to indicate that. at least with regard to certain types of insight and experience, they are almost alternative ways of knowing something. I'm wondering if that's true, and if it is, then do we come to the same knowledge, judgment, decision to act, or do we come to somehow qualitatively different ones?

Pat: Okay. There are a couple of questions there. *This is really not quite the same as the scissors metaphor! The language is still the same: the scissors moving from below upwards and the scissors probably moving from above downwards. So that language is the same. It's different however, because all the times that Lonergan uses the scissors metaphor, including the most recent time that we've just seen in talking about explanatory interpretation, it's all within the realm of the first dynamism. And the movement from below upwards begins in experience, and data, and calculation, and classification, and graphing, and so on. The movement from above downwards doesn't exactly begin in love or in evaluation; it begins in prior intellectual achievement, so in the products of prior intellectual achievement, particularly intellectual achievements that have to do with great generalities, with the most general of theoretical principles in Physics, in Chemistry, in Biology, in Sociology, and as we saw, in Hermeneutics.*

There is nothing obvious in Lonergan's discussion of Hermeneutics that has to do with this second dynamism that we're talking about. The upper blade in Hermeneutics is, as far as *Insight* is concerned, the fruit of a very long wrestling with self-appropriation and its consequences. *And once we have reached self-appropriation, and begun to work out its*

implications for the structure of the real which includes the real of the human, then we're in a position to have some guidance; but it's a guidance from intellect and judgment. It's not a guidance from love. So the first thing is: when he's using the scissors metaphor, it's not quite the same as this meaning of "From above downwards." They are both spatial metaphors, they're both helpful to a point, and they both **have** limitations that we have to get beyond!

And if I understood your second point: roughly something like — correct me if I've misunderstood — roughly something like: *"Do the judgments that result, does the knowledge that results from below upwards and from above downwards, is it the same?" The answer is yes, in so far as the knowledge has to do with proportionate being!* So by believing that it is worthwhile to study with person X, or to study discipline X, out of our love for the subject, a love that is almost always born of someone who has inspired us; but more of that would be judgments, and then eventually understanding, when we understand the grounds for that judgment. Precisely because the movement from above downwards gives rise to questions, it gives rise because of the healing that Jeff was drawing attention to, the healing dimension of this second dynamism; it gives rise to questions that the dynamism from below upwards would have given rise to were there not biases in us. *So yes, it gives rise to the same judgments. The different aspect to this is being in love in an unrestricted fashion can take us totally outside of the whole realm of proportionate being.*

Remember talking about judgments that are *possibly* relevant to the upward dynamism, but may indeed be knowledge of things that are beyond our capacity to know relying solely on the upward dynamism. But as far as proportionate being is concerned, the judgments that are born of *truly unconditional love* — and you might want to substitute in your vocabulary "tough love" — **the judgments** that are born of tough love, not squishy love! Not — this dates me — not Care-Bear love!⁴

[Class amusement]

One of my daughters use to love to watch the "Care Bears" on Saturday mornings. I had to leave the room!!

⁴ Pat's reference here is unknown to the transcriber, whose education was lamentably narrow; hence the terms used above in this connection are mere conjecture.

[Loud class laughter]

It was the most insipid and sentimentalized form of love. That's not what this is!

So in so far as proportionate being is concerned, tough love, unconditional love, unrestricted being in love, will lead to the same judgments of fact, because it empowers and makes requirements for us to pay attention to our upward dynamism as well. Okay? ...

Student question about whether going along with something that a beloved loves (e.g., hockey) out of love for them is enough, or whether one also has to come to love what they love.

One comes to love what the beloved values out of that love.

Analogously, out of love of God, one can come to love all that God loves — which is the love of everything about everything.

Religious traditions bequeath good insights and judgments that help comprehend religious experience.

Pat: Maggie?

Maggie: This might seem like kind of an unnecessary question, but using the example of the hockey game; and I don't like hockey, but I love someone that does, and so I'm just going to hockey. Is it enough to say that I will then grow to love hockey because my beloved loves it, and I like seeing and watching it and enjoy it. Or do I have to love hockey in and of itself?

Pat: You have to love hockey in and of itself!

[Class amusement]

But the entry into it is that it's loved by the beloved!

Maggie: Okay.

Pat: And the big theological dimension to this of course is: if we translate and interpret the phenomenon of religious experience — I tried to make a big deal last week, and probably left a lot of you puzzled about this — *I tried to make a big deal of the fact that in and of itself religious experience is just inchoate. It's just experience; and as experience, we don't know what to make of it. Which is to say that we need some help in making sense of it. And that's what religious traditions, in so far as they are authentic, actually do! They give us good insights and good judgments about that realm of experience.* And the religious traditions that speak of religious experience as being — as Lonergan does — the gift of God's love: that means that *to the extent that a person is truly immersed in this experience of unrestricted being in love, they're in love with everything that God loves, which is everything about everything.* And that's another way of emphasizing —

—There is this awful program, it gets great reviews: “Take a walk!”

[Some student murmurs of recognition]

It has to do with Mormonism, and it's just, you know, exploitative of all that's a bit unseemly in our culture and in our souls.

But this is really big love. If you're testing yourself, and thinking about what does this religious experience, as Lonergan talks about it, what does it really mean: *if you are in love with everything about everything, that's unconditional being in love. For a religious person, you love whatever God loves and God loves everything.* God loves every little electron; and every mitochondrion in every liver cell. And God loves all those people that you really don't want to be in the same room with, you know.

[Class murmurs]

That's what unconditional being in love is all about! So yeah, maybe I'm starting to get a little hot!

[Loud class laughter]

Student question about how the movement from above
downward affects the levels of systems.

The way Lonergan speaks of higher
integrations of lower levels of events
does hold when one gets to the level of
unconditional being in love — there is
some sort of higher integration that
takes place. Although it is different in
some ways.

Pat: Steffie?

Steffie: I was trying to think of this in terms of systems; because I saw the levels as, you know, the lower levels being more basic than issues at the upper levels, and that is why there is this upward movement. So I'm curious about how a downward movement would, you know, affect those systems; or how, I mean, is it like positive feedback? Is it like the algae that creates the conditions for something else to live, so that even after the algae die, the conditions continue on to allow some things to continue to thrive? Or is it the idea of redemption, that, you know, things are corrected by that downward force from above?

Pat: That's a really good question. I'm not sure I've got a really adequate answer for it. For the most part when Lonergan is talking about systems — he starts talking about them a little bit in the human realm with regard to the notion of the good in chapter eighteen (*CWL* 3, “**The Possibility of Ethics**”, pp. 618-656) — but for the most part when Lonergan is talking about systems, up till now, he is talking about chemical systematizations, or elementary particles, or biological systematizations of chemical reactions, or psychic organizations of the realm of the coincidental manifold realm of neural impulses, and then intelligent organization of experiences.

Steffie: Right!

Pat: So to a certain extent, that's reflected here in the movement upwards. It gets a little harder to think about what that means in the systematization of intellectual systems by judgment; and the systematization of judgments of fact by judgments of value; it's a little harder to see that! But it's still a really good question! ... I think, without having really thought about it, the basic instinct that you're pursuing there, I think is fundamentally right! That there is something about being in love in an unconditional fashion that takes over the organizing of valuing, and of judging, understanding, and so on; and does something like a systematization. It's important to remember in all this, Lonergan's big innovation in chapter fifteen (*CWL* 3, "Elements of Metaphysics", pp. 456-511), that in dynamic systems, they are systems on the move, they are self-modifying systems. So I think that there is something right about that. There is a certain kind — *There is a higher autonomy, where being in love in an unrestricted fashion pulls everything up into itself. So if I understood the thrust of your question, I think that's basically right. I'd have to think about it some more.* So yes, it heals, but it doesn't just heal.

There is in Christian theology a distinction between *gratia sanans* [healing grace] and *gratia elevans* [elevating grace]; *sanans* means cleans you up, makes you sanitary.

So grace is healing, that would be *gratia sanans*. But there is also *gratia elevans*, which is —

Steffie: — Raising you up?

Pat: Raising us up! Which means putting into something higher everything that we've been up until now.

So I think your instinct on this is quite right, but I'd have to think a little bit more about some of the implications of it. Okay? ... Okay!

Student questions about religious development as dialectical — authenticity and inauthenticity as the tension between the self-as-transcending and the self-as-transcended. Whether self-surrender is *to* the self, or *of* the self.

The self-as-transcended is not necessarily inauthentic. It is the self up until the present, constituted by the experiences, insights, judgments, decisions one has made so far.

But there is a strong desire to stay that way, and a strong fear of giving up what one has made of oneself so far. A strong resistance against self-surrender.

Inauthenticity is giving in to that resistance and refusing self-surrender in response to love or to the desire to understand, know, value, decide more.

Pat: Tim?

Tim: On page one-eleven of *Method in Theology*, chapter four (“Religion”, p.111); Lonergan says, and this is the second full paragraph there at the bottom:

“Such, then is what is meant by saying that religious development is dialectical. It is not a struggle between any opposites whatever but the very precise opposition between authenticity and unauthenticity, between the self as transcending and the self as transcended.” (*CWL* 14, *Method in Theology*, p.107).

So my question specifically has to do with what he means by the **“self as transcended.”** Because in this sentence here it seems like that that would relate to inauthenticity. And specifically, I’m wondering about how this language might relate to all of a self-surrender, which Lonergan talks about here in chapter four, and it comes up again in *Method* later on; and whether that’s a surrender *to* the self or the surrender *of* the self. As we’ve been talking so far

about the movement from below upwards, we have talked about how self-appropriation is the surrendering *to* oneself as a radical inquirer. So in that sense, I'm leaning towards understanding the movement from above⁵ downwards as a surrendering of the self; or maybe it's "both-and", both dynamisms, except here where he talks about the self as transcended, suggesting that that is relative to unauthenticity. So what would be an authentic as a self being self-transcended rather than being transcending, and can that relate to how we understand self-surrender?

Pat: Okay. Good question! *The self as transcended in and of itself is not automatically inauthentic! The self as transcended is what I am up to now! So think of yourself as constituted up to now by a vast set of experiences that you've had in the years of your life; and yourself as constituted not only by having experiences which is a fairly passive and not a particularly personal self-possessed process. But a little more personal still is what you made of it, the sense you made of it, the sense you made of it by being intelligent, letting yourself ask questions and your getting insights. So much more than the vast realm of experiences that you've had, you are constituted as who you are by the insights that you've had.*

The first and perhaps most obvious point: you are constituted in your personality by the insights that you have gathered to put your experiences together, and with a certain structure and narrative of your life. But equally importantly, you are constituted because you are someone who understands; that is part and parcel of who you are! I understand all these things and you made yourself do that. And likewise, yourself as constituted is what you know; and what you know definitively and what you know probably! You made yourself to be not just an understander but a knower, because of the judgments that you've arrived at, and done the hard work of reaching a virtually unconditioned basis for those judgments! So you've

⁵ Tim uses the word 'below' at this point, but in context this seems like a verbal slip.

made yourself to be a person who is built up of your judgments! And likewise by your judgements of value.

And especially, and most importantly, and most profoundly, by your decisions! That every time you decide for something, you also decide to make yourself be a person who decides for them. So that's yourself as constituted. It's so much richer and complicated and vast than your physical appearance.

Now, for most people, except people who are really good at deception, for most people their self-constitution is shown on their face, and shown in their bodily posture. That business that we had last week, the last couple of weeks, about sign and symbol — *People are symbols. They not only are images as images, but they are images as signs that are accompanied by meanings, which we are going to talk about a little bit later today. And images as symbols: people who incarnate the known unknown, because to be human is to be constituted by unrestricted desire. People do portray their self as constituted, constituted in their speech, in their faces, in their facial appearances, in their gestures, and especially in their deeds.*

But that's all and only what I am up until now. Something that Lonergan doesn't really make as explicit in *Method in Theology* as he makes elsewhere, is *how much we like to hold on to that possession! And how much, perhaps even more importantly, we fear letting go of that possession!* You folks have been at it less time than I have. I've worked really hard to be the understander, and knower, and valuer, that I am; and I don't want it taken away! *Self-surrender means the risk of giving it all up!* So here he doesn't say, explicitly there, but the big tension between “**self as transcended**” and “**self as transcending.**” (CWL 14, *Method in Theology*, p.107) is your self-valuation, which in fact is a good and healthy thing! Self-loathing is not a good thing! And in fact it's not even objective!

But it's one thing to hold on to yourself as you've achieved it so far; it's another thing to love yourself as more fundamentally self-transcending!

So there is a tension in us between really liking what we've done so far, and fearing jumping off into the abyss of we know not what! And if you really take seriously the un-

restrictedness of inquiry, and the un-conditional-ness of being in love, you really don't know that any of that is going to survive.

*So that's the inauthenticity! The inauthenticity is the holding on to what I've got, and the refusal or the avoidance of the demands that the two dynamisms are making on you. That's not explicit in what he says there, so it's a really good question! It looks like he's equating inauthenticity with the self as transcending; what he is really doing is equating the comfort of the self as transcended, and the resistance of the self as transcended with inauthenticity! In his *Lectures on Phenomenology and Existentialism*,⁶ he makes that be — There are actually hints of it also in what we read in *Topics in Education*.⁷ He makes that be his take on what he thinks Kierkegaard and Heidegger mean by *Angst*, anxiety: *that anxiety is the anxiety of giving up what I've made of myself. And that's what he means by inauthenticity. And being in love in an unconditioned fashion makes the giving it up so attractive that people bear it!* Okay?*

Tim: Thank you.

Pat: All right! Other questions on this? ... Okay. Good, good! ...

Further question about what is meant by self-surrender —
what giving it up to?

The problem is that this is unknown at the
moment of the decision of self-
surrender.

Example of college students who have to
give up dreams for careers that they had
when coming to college. Sometimes

⁶ Pat is probably referring to the material published in *CWL 18: "Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism"*, ed. Philip J. McShane, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

⁷ *CWL 10: "Topics in Education"*, ed. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

giving up one's own dreams for the
sake of the dreams of a beloved.

Does God compromise as human lovers do? The very
being of God is self-surrender, according to most world
religions.

Pat: Ah, Natalie?

Natalie: I'm just thinking about "giving up"? I mean, like, what are you giving it
up to? Or —

Pat: *You don't know! That's the problem!*

Natalie: But giving it up, does that inviolate — I mean, I don't understand how
loving, like, in traditional loving you have to give that up, like? If you have to give it up, well
then you have lost it, regardless of what is new —

Pat: I missed the last part of the sentence there.

Natalie: What do you mean by giving up, like, what you've made of yourself; so
that it, like, everything that you've made of yourself like, so the way you see yourself and stuff,
that just, is it so any more then?

Pat: *You don't know!* The way I like to think of it is: *I'll get it all back, but
just better —*

[Student murmurs, perhaps of delight]

— *which is not really quite self-surrender! It's sort of a bargain that I make with myself about
this. ... So ... You know, really concretely: people come to college, and they've got career
trajectories. And one of the more difficult things that happens in college, is when people find
that that which they had envisioned as their career, as their hope, it's not what they mean. It
started out as pre-med, and they are getting to seeing that that vision of themselves as doctors
starting to disintegrate like something turned into sand, starting to fall away. Or — I can speak
biographically, they can see that Nobel Prize in Elementary Physics — when I'm not even the
best person in a class of thirteen — starting to look like it's not very realistic!*

[Loud class laughter]

Okay. *That's being faced with the self that you constituted yourself as, to a certain extent, and this is mainly now the self that you imagined; rather than the self in this richer sense that I was talking about earlier.*

So people come to universities to study! *I think they have plans, and they've got hopes, and they've got dreams. And just the sheer movement from below upwards can cast a monkey-wrench into those plans!* Now, let's add to that the fact that they fall in love with somebody that they meet at college, which happens fairly frequently. And your dreams and their dreams are leading to two different places, and it can become very difficult to see how you can put both sets of dreams together. *Self-surrender is when people makes decisions that there is a greater good than that upon which I placed all my hopes and dreams. And that's really difficult to give up!*

Natalie: So doesn't it involve the self-surrender of parts —

Pat: Yes!

Natalie: It's just parts of something that matters, you know?⁸

Pat: That's right. Concretely, it usually means that one person's dream cancels out a little bit more than the other's, if not a lot more! I dragged my wife all over the place! ... And so on. ... I like to think that I did some compromising!

[Student laughter]

And she will say, with great accuracy, that her compromising was the greater part in our relationship. ... ?

Natalie: So how does it work out with like God, where it God obviously — there is no compromising on his part, I think?

Pat: Yeah, there is no compromising on God's part, that's right!

But, I mean, now this gets more into Theology, than it is in Philosophy. What I think you can argue is true of all religions: it's certainly true in Christianity; it's true in Judaism; it's

⁸ Natalie's comments and questions are not clearly audible to the transcriber, and the above is largely conjecture by him.

true in Islam; and to the extent that I have any knowledge of it, it's true in Hinduism, in Buddhism: that God is giving God's self up, for the sake of the beloved finite creatures. That doesn't look that way, because it looks like we have this image in our imaginations, that God is in control making us do what God wants to do. That's not the teaching that is at the heart — or at least very very present, in a very permeating way, in most religions. *God is giving God's self over in an unconditioned way to human beings. So it actually turns out to be pretty mutual.* The difficulty is we're built to want the unconditional love, even though there is another part of us that resists it! *So what looks like God being in control, is really giving us what it is that we mostly profoundly and deeply desire.* [Pat's summary statement in his Outline: “**The very being of God is self-surrender, according to most world religions.**”] That's a big — That's a big vessel of questions that we've put forward, in the way that we've said that. There is a lot that is implicit!

Lonergan on Interpretation in *Insight*.

He will claim that the method of metaphysics holds the key to interpretation.

Just as the method of metaphysics anticipates the distortions that produce a dialectic in the history of metaphysics, so also he regards his method of interpretation (hermeneutics) as based in his metaphysics as capable of dealing with the distortions of meaning and problems of interpretation that permeate the history of human meanings.

All right! With your permission, I'd like to move on and talk about Interpretation. And I want to begin with a couple of observations drawn from various parts of the text that we've read not only in chapter seventeen (*CWL* 3, “The Truth of Interpretation,” pp. 585-617), but sections that we've read in other parts of *Insight* about interpretation, or at least that pertain to interpretation. This is to lay out what some of Lonergan's preoccupations are in writing this section on “The Truth of Interpretation”; the background being Lonergan is making the

argument that his account of Metaphysics — And remember the account of Metaphysics is **“the conception, affirmation, and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being.”** (CWL 3, p. 416). Remember also that that implicitly means, in the implementation phase, taking seriously, the dialectical distortions and the dialectical processes of the human realm.

Insight on Interpretation

“such a method meets the problem of relativism ...” (CWL 3, p. 600).

“in principle and under appropriate reservations a correct interpretation is possible.” (CWL 3, p. 601).

“By beginning from the universal viewpoint there is eliminated the relativity not only of the interpreter to his [or her] prospective audience but also of both interpreter and audience to places and times, schools and sects.” (CWL 3, p. 609).

So what Lonergan is doing here is showing, or trying to make the argument, that his method of Metaphysics has profound implications for the problem of interpretation. And to talk about it as a problem means you have to see what sort of problems there might be. There are a number of problems — I’m going to try to sketch some of them, both ones that Lonergan explicitly mentions or points to, and perhaps some that are implicit; and then see what he does, or how he thinks about coming at this. *So among the things that Lonergan says in this section of*

Insight is that he sees his method, which is: *he says that an elaborated method based in the Method of Metaphysics, that it meets the problem of relativism.* Okay.

First among the problems of interpretation is that of
relativism.

What is meant by “relativism” in interpretation?

Discussion — individual and cultural
relativism; whether there is any
objective standard for interpretation.

Thomas Kuhn moved the problem of
relativism from interpretation in the
humanities into the realm of the natural
sciences as well.

These are different from the relativism due to
biases.

Lonergan claims that, under proper conditions, objective
interpretation is possible.

What do you understand by “the problem of relativism,” with regard to interpretation? ...
What’s the problem of relativism? ... Stephanie?

Stephanie: Everyone’s interpretation is just as accurate or just as acceptable as
anyone else’s.

Pat: Okay. That’s one way of formulating it certainly. Every interpretation is
as good as everybody else’s. ... Jeff?

Jeff: I was going to say virtually the same thing.

Pat: Okay. Let's see if people have any other ways of thinking about what is the problem of relativism. So one way is everybody's interpretation is as good as everybody else's. ... Maggie?

Maggie: There are no standards of accurate or correct interpretation.

Pat: Right! So on the one hand Jeff and Stephanie are giving the upbeat side of the relativism of interpretation; and Maggie is giving us the dark side of the relativism of interpretation. *We're stuck with the fact that all we can do is interpret relative to ourselves, or relative to our group, or — Ah, Stephanie?*

Stephanie: Ah, it kind of implies that there is no such thing as a universal answer, like truth.

Pat: Sure! Well, yes. And that's why [this section](#) is called "The Truth of Interpretation" (*CWL 3*, pp. 585-617); because as we'll see in the next statement, Lonergan says, very forthrightly,

"in principle and under appropriate reservations a correct interpretation is possible." (*CWL 3*, p. 601).⁹

And, as you know, in that section he also talks about "objective interpretation"! Almost a scandalous way of putting together two words! So he is making claims here about the possibility of objective interpretation, the possibility of true interpretation!

Jeff: He also uses the idea of paradigm, because, like, on a second order level down the interpretation of your interpretation would become lost. So there is no way to discuss what would be a correct interpretation.

Pat: Ah, that's right! That's right! So another thing about relativism is, if I've got this, there is no way to say how my interpretation compares to somebody else's. Is that your point?

⁹ Pat (accidentally, the transcriber thinks) misquotes the passage here by using the word 'impossible' rather than 'possible', probably a *lapsus linguae*.

Jeff: Well, like, if you have a stance and I have a stance, there's no way like you can't sort of mediate between those two because there would be a loss of meaning in that as well.

Pat: That's right. Good. Good point. This by the way is — It comes into the History of Philosophy — Excuse me, it comes into the Philosophy of Science with the work of Thomas Kuhn. Some of you who are familiar with the work of Thomas Kuhn; *he makes an argument that scientific work is done within the context of a paradigm, and that there is no such thing as a trans-paradigmatic context. So if there are two competing paradigms, there is no way to say which paradigm is the superior of the two.* The standard assumption up until Kuhn's work, was that you could always appeal to the data of sense, as the way of adjudicating between competing theories. They wouldn't have used the word 'paradigm'. Kuhn makes a strong argument — I won't claim that it is a very tight argument — but it is a strong argument, that *the data of sense is itself already situated within a paradigm. It takes its meaning from a paradigm; the instruments that are used to elicit the data, and the methods that are used to evaluate and adjudicate the data, they are all part of the paradigm! So there is no already out there now sensations that stand outside of paradigms; that data is always selected, it is always selected in a certain pattern, and that the paradigm is in control of that, so you don't have this independent adjudication!*

Very important twentieth-century thinkers have made important use of Kuhn: Richard Rorty and Jean-François Lyotard, *for example*. Lyotard, notably in his essay on *The Postmodern Condition*, and Rorty in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (1979)*, have made important use of Kuhn in their works. That said, people who are working in the History and Philosophy of Science are about a century behind, because this is an issue that came up, of course, in Philosophy and Historiography back in the nineteenth century. So this whole problem with the relativism of paradigms — Excuse me, *the relativism of interpretations, and whether or not there was any standard or context to which one can appeal, to compare or adjudicate or find connections among the paradigms, has become one of the great problems of interpretation. So Lonergan has got this very much in his mind.* Arguably, this is the most important thing that he's got in his mind in this whole section. And his answer to it is extremely complicated, as you may have noticed. Okay.

Other thoughts on the problem of relativism? ... There is one other thing in here on the problem. There are a couple of things on the problem of relativism that people haven't addressed specifically Let me just mention — *There is the relativism that has to do with cultural formation.* That's perhaps implicit in some of what has been said, but I wanted to emphasize that: *that people do their interpreting from where they are!* That's not quite the same as saying, as Stephanie and Jeff said, *everybody's interpretation is the same as everybody else's.* Nor is it quite the same as what Maggie said, that *this seems to imply that there is no such thing as a standard or objective or normative interpretation.* *It is a more concrete recognition that interpretations, at least in the beginning, originate with where we are, with our selves and our communities as transcended, not as transcending.*

And the other thing — Something that Lonergan himself draws attention to, which arguably is implicit in some of the discussions about objectivity and relativism of interpretation, is biases! *So there is a point where he talks about: relative to the biases that people have; the problem of overcoming the interpretations that are relative to biases.*

Lonergan's response to the problem of relativism in interpretation is his **“universal viewpoint.”**

Method of interpretation as having to do with discovering significance of an expression that goes beyond the horizon of the one who articulated the expression.

Interpretation as a creative activity that brings forward meanings that the originator of a text might not recognize.

Interpretation understands history as better than it really was. The converted person operating in the functional specialty, Dialectics, **“develops positions and reverses counter-positions, [and] will be presenting an idealized version of the past, something better than was the reality.”** (CWL 14, *Method in Theology*, p. 236).

“Explanatory (or scientific) interpretation” does this by situating expressions of meaning in the context of sequences of genetic developments and dialectical reversals.

Lonergan’s response to this is what he calls “**The Universal Viewpoint**”. I drew attention back in the fall semester to this remark that Lonergan makes about: *understand understanding, and you’ll have a fixed base, an invariant base for comprehending all that there is to be understood*. And I said that that will be the end for most postmodern readers: they will just close the book at this point! And if they got this far, when they got to the universal viewpoint, they would know that they had been had, and that would be the end of it!

It is arguably, and especially in the context of serious and important criticism of totality by, let’s say Levinas, by onto-theology by Heidegger, of millenarians by Lyotard, and the work of Derrida, and so on: it is arguably offensive to talk about a universal viewpoint. And yet, there it is!

“By beginning from the universal viewpoint there is eliminated the relativity not only of the interpreter to his [or her] prospective audience, but also of both interpreter and audience to places and times, schools and sects.” (*CWL* 3, p. 609).

That’s what I was getting at by the relativity that’s rooted in the performative context in which we exist.

So those are some of the preoccupations that Lonergan has in developing his approach to interpretation in what he calls his “methodological hermeneutics” in *Insight*.

Insight on Interpretation

“Philosophers and philosophies engage our attention inasmuch as they are instances and products of inquiring intelligence and reflecting reasonableness. [This] is the ground for finding in any given philosophy a significance that can extend beyond the philosopher’s horizon and, even in a manner he [or she] did not expect.”
(*CWL* 3, p. 412).

Evaluative history: “Better than it really was.”
(*CWL* 14, *MiT*).

Here’s another couple of thoughts, reflections, that are in the background. This one actually goes all the way back to the beginning of chapter fourteen (*CWL* 3, “**The Method of Metaphysics**”, pp. 410-455).

“Philosophers and philosophies engage our attention inasmuch as they are instances and products of inquiring intelligence and reflecting reasonableness. [This] is the ground for finding in any given philosophy a significance that can extend beyond the philosopher’s horizon and, even in a manner he [or she] did not expect.” (CWL 3, p. 412).

Even in a manner that he or she did not expect!

Now, that is a statement on interpretation. It’s a statement that comes before Lonergan was talking about interpretation. It’s in a context in which he is talking about other philosophers, whom he names explicitly, in particular Descartes and Kant, in that very section, on those very pages — Excuse me, *Descartes and Hume. Although Kant is always the specter in the background; and behind, the specter behind the specter is Hegel. So always Lonergan has got Kant and Hegel on his mind.*

And here he is making the argument that in the work of any great thinker, however much Lonergan disagrees with their account of knowing, with their account of objectivity, with their account of reality, there are profound contributions that they are making; and yet, a significance that they would not even recognize; that a certain kind of interpreter, a Lonergan type of interpreter, will discern. So interpretation then is actually doing something very creative! In addition to overcoming the relativity of interpretation, Lonergan is very clear that interpretation is a creative activity that brings forward significances in texts and expressions that the originators themselves would not recognize, and might even try to disown! This is a very funny kind of interpretation that he is talking about here.

I was looking for the exact passage in *Method in Theology* for the slide’s second phrase, but I didn’t have time to find it: there is a passage in *Method in Theology* — it wasn’t in the section that I thought it was in — where Lonergan talks about evaluative history and historical method, and he makes the very peculiar claim that *historical method, dialectical historical method, will give an account of things that were better than they really were!* **“Better than it**

really was.” (CWL 14).¹⁰ That sounds like doing history in a completely non-objective fashion. Lonergan quotes von Ranke, that *history is about grasping things as they really were, that that’s the task of methodical history*. And Lonergan goes von Ranke one better, and says “No, *objective historical interpretation is knowing things better than they really were.*” *It’s a very strange claim to make! Yet that is how he understands the task of interpretation*. Just as a hint: though in both of these quotes [in the slide](#), what is in the background are the counterpositions and the biases.

So interpretation, as you know from having read this, has to do with using a method that gets at the genetic and the dialectical ordering of sequences of expressions. And that the objective, what he is going to call ‘scientific’ — which I would prefer to call ‘explanatory’ — interpretation, is an interpretation which situates expressions of meaning in the context of their dialectical distortions. And for Lonergan, to do dialectic means not just to say: “See that’s where you’re bad!” It means to reverse the counterpositions. So the extent to which you can make available to the readers of an interpretation an account, an interpretation, of a text that shows it in clarity, in its dialectical complexity, will enable the wheat to come forward as wheat and the chaff to be separated out as chaff. And fundamentally, that’s what he’s getting at here! It is ultimately truly objective; it’s objective in a way that keeps value judgments, as integral to interpretation, into account; and he’s endeavoring to do it in a methodical fashion, and not just an arbitrary “shoot from the hip”!

¹⁰ This transcriber has been unable to locate a place in *CWL 14*, *MiT*, in which this claim is so baldly made. Perhaps Lonergan’s claim is simply that *objective historical interpretations may come to know things better than they were known by participants in and or contemporaries of those things*. Possibly relevant passages in *CWL 14*, *MiT*, may be the following: pp. 168, 173-174, 190, 212-213, 231.

Student question about whether interpretation “reads too much into the text” instead of what the author really intended

Ambiguity of what the author “really intended.” In every act of meaning, humans intend beyond the finitude of that act.

The ideal of what is “really intended *in* the text” can be under the influence of the counter-position of the already-out-there-now conception of meaning

A human meaning is never just static; it is always already on the way to richer meaning or more decadent meaning — or both at the same time in different ways.

Modern methods of interpretation (Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, post-modern) bring to light important dynamics of meaning; but they can also become monolithic and obscure the richness of meaning.

Pat: Okay. So there are a number of questions. First Maggie, then Jeff, and then Greg?

Maggie: So in literature when you are reading in English class or something, and people — All right, the Professor or the Teacher raises or points out things in the text, and the

responses end up then as: “Oh, do you think they actually intended that, or are we reading into it too much?” I’m wondering: am I correct to say that the role of the interpreter is to read into it too much, and see this connection or intelligibility that’s in the text, whether or not the writer intended it, or meant it?

Pat: That’s a really good question. And it trades on the ambiguity of ‘intended’. And it’s the same ambiguity, or it’s the same tension that Tim was asking about earlier in the class. ‘Intended’ in the sense of “self-as-constituted”, or ‘intended’ in the sense of “self-as-constituting”; ‘intended’ as “the self to be transcended” and ‘intended’ in the sense of “the self-as-transcending”. Which is the real self? Or, to put it another way, which is the real intending? We will see in a moment a passage that Lonergan has in this section where he draws attention to the fact that *in every act of meaning, we are doing an intending that is beyond the finiteness of that act of meaning.*

And there are certain difficulties that are involved in trying to think about interpretation, and the obvious one is something he refers to, which hopefully we will see on the slide, where he talks about: If you take the counter-position on knowing and objectivity and being that the meaning has to be already-out-there, and it’s clearly not in the black marks on the monuments, then in fact it must be already in there [Pat seems to gesture inwards]. And so objectivity then means getting inside the mind of the author and thinking the way the author thinks.

Lonergan thinks that *firstly, that’s impossible*, and most serious thinkers about the problem of interpretation agree with him. And *secondly, that interpretation isn’t like that at all!!*

What we do in interpreting is what we do with everything else: we ask and answer questions about our experiences, and accumulate insights in a self-correcting pattern! And by that means, we transcend to the meanings of expressions!

What he’s going to be getting at by explanatory or scientific interpretation, grounded in self-appropriation, is that *we get both*, so to speak, finite achievement of the text, but also its dialectical in and of itself — or let’s say, *its declining and progressing tendencies*; that a human meaning never just sits still! It’s always already on the way; and it can be on the way simultaneously both to richer and fuller meaning, and to decadent narrowing and contractive meaning.

So the intention of the author is both to illuminate us and to screw us up! And the objective interpretation is to situate it that way, and to show it to the audience for the audience's heartfelt response, intelligent and heart-felt response to it. Now, when students, or for that matter, peers say: "Is that really the author's intention or are you just reading into it?" there is always the possibility, contrary to — over and above everything that I've just said, there is always the possibility that this is just somebody's hobby-horse!

Maggie: Like, I know that inverse insight, like, they're reading in something else; there is nothing.

Pat: Right! Right! Lonergan has a comment in there, it looks like almost a throwaway: that there is also a residue of interpretation. And you can make the residue into the whole meaning; you can get totally obsessed with things. Now, we know well that some interpreters, especially in the twentieth century, that make convincing cases that what at some point was regarded as residual, was actually something that has got a lot of profound meaningfulness to it: feminist criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, post-modern criticism, Marxist criticism, do indeed draw to our attention meanings, perhaps overwhelmingly dialectically distorted trajectories or intentions; and *those can be just ideological*: if you can say —

Let's just arbitrarily pick Jane Austen. Now Jane Austen is a bourgeois! The bourgeois had the ideology of the bourgeois class, therefore everything she wrote is just an articulation of the class interest of the owners of the means of production. That's pretty crude!! Jane Austen, as you've probably figured out, is one of my favorite authors, and I simply don't buy that as an adequate interpretation of her work.

[Class amusement]

But you can have a much more sophisticated and subtle Marxist, who can point out things about Jane Austen's novels; the very fact that virtually all of Jane Austen's novels are about women who faced the awful dilemma of marrying somebody who was really not going to make them happy, or, facing a life of destitution; well, that's there!! And Jane Austen clearly is very aware of that; and *she* explores the people who respond to that in deeply authentic ways, and the people who respond to it in frivolous ways, in inauthentic ways. So there are certainly those dimensions that *she is dealing with*. So when people are asking, with regard to a particular thing:

Are you just reading that in? ... There have actually been a number of movies, where, they are about college professors; and having fun at college professors who are getting really fixated on a certain kind of ideological interpretation [in such a way](#) that the richness of the meaning of a text no longer matters! ... So, does that answer your question?

Maggie: Yes, thank you!

Student question about Lonergan's "ultimate viewpoint."

Corrective regarding the difference between an "ultimate viewpoint" vs. Lonergan's "universal viewpoint."

The limited universal viewpoint is only heuristic. Not a complete account of all meaning; rather, a structured anticipation of all meanings.

Further question: Is the ground of the universal viewpoint the unrestricted desire to know or unconditional love?

Lonergan does not spell out the way unconditional love can be the ground of a universal viewpoint until *Method in Theology*. Briefly discussed.

In *Insight*, however, Lonergan attempts to work out the universal viewpoint solely on the basis of the first dynamism of the unrestricted desire to know.

Pat: Who was next? Jeff?

Jeff: My question is: in this interpretation process, sort of, the ultimate viewpoint, does it have to —

Pat: — *Remember he says it is not an ultimate viewpoint. It is a universal viewpoint!*

Jeff: Oh, we decided that that's the word for that.

Pat: Yeah! Okay!

And the reason I am making a big deal of this is because it is such a loaded term! And of course the big point here is that the universal viewpoint is completely heuristic! And it is not a meta-narrative in Lyotard's sense. It's not an attempt to give a total account of everything! It is an attempt to give a guidance to a total anticipation of all human meanings, but not an exhaustive account of all human meanings!

Sorry! That's like, when Lonergan — People used to ask Lonergan, "Why is it necessary that to ...?" That was the end of the question! Lonergan focused in on the necessity! Sorry! Go ahead!

Jeff: My question is: Does it have to proceed from a stance of an ultimate, like a love of the knowledge of an interpretation, or is it an unrestricted desire. Like which dynamism is —

Pat: Oh, that's a really good question! It's not a question that can be answered — that Lonergan answers in *Insight*. It's a question that he's got a kind of an answer to in *Method in Theology*.

Jeff: It seems to me, though, that it would almost have to be the second dynamism, the above downwards?

Pat: Ahm, I think that the right way, well — *The way to say this is that in the context of Method in Theology he recognized that dimension! In the context of Insight, I think it's quite true that a person who is genuinely motivated by truly open-ended love for the author of the text, that's an interpreter who is capable of facing all of the unwanted things in their beloved author, in their beloved text, because they are so open to the being and even the non-*

being of the text. That they really can understand it and embrace it. So yeah, you are right about that! It's just not in Insight! You could make the argument that it is tacitly there in certain places, but he is really trying to work it out on the basis of the first dynamism, and particularly the first dynamism as having reached a certain pinnacle in self-appropriation, and the working out of the implications of self-appropriation. Okay.

Student question about whether the quest for the historical Jesus was a motivating factor in Lonergan's thought about interpretation.

The quest for the historical Jesus was only part of a larger set of issues of history and theology that motivated Lonergan.

Pat: Right! Greg?

Greg: Just a quick question about the kind of background behind this question of interpretation: I was wondering about the extent to which — like, I read a chapter on literary interpretation, and when I finished it and was reflecting on it, remembering some of the comments you made at the beginning of the year about his preoccupation with the account for history in theology, and how they had done inadequately; and I wondered if the kind of twentieth century turn towards historic criticism, the search for the historical Jesus, particularly in theology, and even for a particular human as a Catholic priest, is that at all — Are the implications for this in theology, is that at all some kinds of why he is concerned with this at this point?

Pat: It certainly was influencing him; I would say, perhaps less than the Search for the Historical Jesus, *just the whole development of historical situatedness of Biblical Criticism*, that is certainly there! The less obvious and more complicated things that have to do with the History of the Church and the development of doctrine, and the complex issues that have to do with whether or not there is such a thing as “development of doctrine”; that's also very much here. And very, very, specifically, *the development of Thomas Aquinas's thought*. One of the things that he found fault with in the scholarship of his own time regarding Thomas's

writings on Grace, was *the failure of large numbers of scholars that he was familiar with, to have been able to think about what it would mean for Aquinas's thought to have developed.*

You notice in chapter seventeen there is a lengthy section that has to do with *the limitations of the treatise.* And his comment there has to do with the anticipation of a systematic organization, or a systematic interpretation. In the background there is his argument with people who were writing on Thomas's thought at the same time that he was — the first time on Grace, and later on Trinitarian Theology — who he felt did not take seriously the problem of interpreting Aquinas as somebody whose thought developed.

In his dissertation on Grace, he situates the development of Thomas's thought within a larger development of thought on Nature and Grace that stems all the way back to Augustine; and he traces it through certain major developments. And his — [Lonergan](#) saw himself — Let me put this the other way — I think that a lot of what he is doing in chapter seventeen is giving a refined articulation to what he thought he did in his own scholarship, by situating Aquinas's thought on these two major topics; and giving an interpretation that took into account these genetic and dialectical dimensions of the development and of the expressions. So yes! The quest for the historical Jesus, but that was, I think, at best a marginal interest of Lonergan's; the wider sense of the other things having to do with the vast range of historical scholarship of scripture, of historical scholarship having to do with the development of the Church and the development of doctrine, and in particular development of Aquinas's thought. Okay.

All right! Let's take a break!

End of Part One