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Objectivity as the Fruit of Authentic Subjectivity

Abstract

One of the most important problems of philosophy is the “critical problem”, the problem of bridge between the human mind and the world, the external reality. It is the question of relations between the subject and the object. The interesting solution for this problem is given by Bernard Lonergan SJ (1904–1984), one of the most important Catholic English-speaking thinkers of the twentieth century. It would be difficult to point to someone who influenced the American Catholic philosophy and theology from the inside out more than he did: that is why he is called the “American Rahner „. He tries to connect the great tradition of Thomism and Augustinianism and, on the other hand, classical and modern philosophy, German idealism and English Empiricism. At the heart of his thinking is the theory of the human mind. With the help of transcendental and phenomenological methods, Lonergan demonstrates that the mental structure of man consists of five levels: the empirical level, the intellectual level, the rational level, the responsible level and the level of religious experience, which together create a cumulative process that leads to knowledge and decision. The most important point here is he act of understanding, the insight, which always has a creative moment, especially on the second and third levels, as an effect of the subject’s work. The correct understanding of this moment enables a mediation between the empirical, rational and idealistic understanding of the knowledge process. Correct action on all levels, faithfulness to the nature of the subject, leads to truth – according to Lonergan’s very apt maxim: objectivity is the fruit of the authentic subjectivity.

Keywords

Objectivity of Human Knowing, Subjectivity and Objectivity, Critical Problem, Transcendental Method, Structure of Human Consciousness, Bernard Lonergan.

The problem of the objectivity of cognition is one of the most important problems in philosophy and it concerns the whole of human existence. That is why solutions to this problem have been pursued for a long time and in many ways, particularly intensively in the modern age. Among numerous proposals to solve it, Bernard Lonergan's conception based on his philosophy of cognition, and especially his theory of the human subject, is one of the most interesting and valuable.

Bernard Lonergan SJ (1904–1984), a Jesuit of Canadian origin, who spent his entire academic life in Rome and Boston, is one of the most prominent Catholic thinkers of the English language speaking countries in the 20th century. It proves difficult to name someone whose philosophical and theological thought influenced this cultural circle more than him. This is evidenced by the incomparable dissemination of his thought in the Catholic theological and philosophical departments at universities and the existence of research centers (13 in total), the so-called "Lonergan Centers"¹, which deal with the collection and dissemination of Lonergan literature, as well as with the coordination of research about his thought. Despite his enormous, and in many respects, ground-breaking accomplishments, Lonergan remains a philosopher little-known in Poland.²

¹ The largest such center, founded and run by the most eminent expert on Lonergan thought, Frederick E. Crowe SJ, is the Toronto center. Other locations are in Canada: Montreal; in the USA: Boston, Santa Clara, Saint Paul; in Italy: Rome, Naples; in Ireland: Dublin; in Australia: Melbourne, Sydney, Pymble; in the Philippines: Manila and Cebu City. See "Lonergan Studies Newsletter" 1980–1997, abbreviated as LSN; especially T. J. Tekippe, *News From the Lonergan Centers*, LSN 8/2: 1987, p. 15.

² In Poland one may treat as exceptions the pioneering works of Andrzej Bronek and Fr. Józef Herbut. Cf. e.g. J. Herbut, *The Transcendental Method: Objectivity of Cognition and Its Criterion. The Discussion of B.J.F. Lonergan's Conception*, "Roczniki Filozoficzne" 28 (1980), pp. 91–117; B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, translated by A. Bronk, Warsaw 1976, and M. Walczak, *Insight and Cognition. Epistemology by Bernard J.F. Lonergan*, Lublin 2012. In the circle of German culture, Bernard Lonergan became known especially thanks to the work of Rev. Professor Giovanni B. Sala SJ from Munich (with whom I studied and who was also the supervisor of my doctorate in philosophy). His work (together with Philippe H. Fluri) embraces the German translation of Lonergan's *Insight*, as well as many other works such as G. B. Sala, *Kant, Lonergan und der christliche Glaube. Ausgewählte philosophische Beiträge. Festgabe zum 75. Geburtstag*, (ed. U. L. Lehner i R. K. Tacelli), Nordhausen 2005 and G. B. Sala, *Die Struktur der menschlichen Erkenntnis. Eine Erkenntnislehre*, Darmstadt 2009.

³ The most comprehensive biography of Lonergan and an introduction to his thought can be found in: FE Crowe, *Lonergan*, London 1992. The most important biographical data regarding Lonergan can be found in the articles: G. Sala, Lonergan, in: *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, vol. 5, Roma 1979, p. 215–217, and F. E. Crowe, "Bernard Lonergan's Thought on Ultimate

This deficiency must be made up for, especially because East European societies, their culture and Church, their philosophy and theology are now in a similar spiritual situation to the one in which Lonergan lived, and experience challenges similar to those which he tried to respond to. It is a breakthrough situation in which the old and the new tendencies clash in the whole of culture, including philosophy and theology.

The secret of the strength and attractiveness of Lonergan's thought is precisely the skillful, well balanced, and successful combination of the old and the new in his philosophy. There is no place here for an exhaustive presentation of his intellectual path and its fruits, but for the general, necessary orientation it must be said that Lonergan, along with J. Maréchal, K. Rahner, JB Lotz and E. Coreth, is one of the leading representatives of the Catholic transcendental thought, which he developed both in philosophy and theology, in the life-giving and meaningful exchange between these two disciplines.³ Lonergan wanted

Reality and Meaning", "Ultimate Reality and Meaning" 4 (1981), pp. 58–87, 56–60. A full bibliography of Lonergan's works and a constantly updated bibliography of secondary literature, prepared by Terry J. Tekippe, is also available at each of the Lonergan Centers (preferably at the Toronto Center: Lonergan Research Institute (<http://www.lonerganresearch.org>), 10 St Mary Street, Suite 500) Toronto, Ontario Canada M4Y 1P9). The latest data on Lonergan publications, as well as conferences and symposia concerning his thought, is provided by the quarterly "Lonergan Studies Newsletter", which is also available at each of the Lonergan Centers.

³ See my article "The Transcendental Method as a Method of Metaphysics after an Anthropological Turn," *Analecta Cracoviensia* 28 (1996), pp. 234–253. It seems that the fact of the work of some of these authors both in philosophy and theology (especially Rahner and Lonergan) does not have to be the weak but just on the contrary the strong side of their thought. This is supported both by the reflection on the paths of philosophy's development and historical experience. Every philosopher, despite even the greatest efforts to objectify his/her cognition, to free himself /herself from the conditions of life and that which relativizes and limits his/her judgements, despite all successes, despite all innovation in many respects remains the child of his/her time, culture and tradition – also the philosophical one: the child who unavoidably recycles many beliefs and prejudices of the acquired legacy without the possibility of a critical and in-depth check. This can be said especially when we think about the systems and philosophical projects from the perspective of centuries, when we compare them with their predecessors and successors, as well as with the philosophies of other cultural circles. Everyone has and even must have some non-philosophical inspirations. And can one at the beginning of creating a philosophy, before setting its criteria, indicate cognitively and ethically better and cleaner inspirations than those that come from authentic Christianity? One can talk about Christian philosophy not in terms of its use of the arguments of a faith (because it would then already be a theology), but in terms of its conscious openness to the ideas of faith as suggestions, suppositions, proposals, and then to talk about them and evaluate them with purely rational, strictly philosophical argumentation. Were the non-philosophical inspirations of Nietzsche or Marx and Sartre and their students and followers better?

to help create a theology which would meet the demands of his time (and this concerned especially the theological method). However, he knew very well that this was only possible on the basis of the best traditions in philosophy, and that is why he devoted a large part of his life to create a new philosophical synthesis. He tried to preserve the treasures of the tradition of Christian philosophy, especially Thomism and Augustinianism, and at the same time he was open to all the achievements of modern and contemporary philosophy. He fully accepted the anthropological turn that took place in philosophy, and he sought to create a synthesis of that which is best in the tradition of Christian thought, German idealism and British empiricism. That is why he accepted philosophical inspirations and correctives ensuing from the empirical research and the methodology of natural sciences. He made the transcendental and phenomenological method the basic tool for his work, while recognizing the philosophy of cognition and the philosophy of man as the first branches of philosophy – the basis for metaphysics, ethics and the philosophy of God.⁴

In his philosophy, the primacy of metaphysics (at least chronological) is replaced by the primacy of the philosophy of cognition. According to one of the main trends in modern philosophy, Lonergan, before asking about what is cognizable, first asks *how* we cognize and *what* we can cognize. Man is at the center

It is known that a good knowledge of non-philosophical fields was the source and condition of unique creativity and fruitfulness of philosophical thought (just as the reason for the fruitlessness or error of philosophy was often the lack of this knowledge). This was the case, for example, with Plato's aesthetics, the medical knowledge of Aristotle, the mathematical and physical knowledge of Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Wittgenstein, Whitehead, and Russel. This was also the case with the Judaic knowledge of Buber, Rosenzweig, Lévinas, Heschl, the Christian knowledge of such thinkers as Augustine, Thomas, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Schelling, Newman, Blondel, Shestov, Soloviev, Stein, Weil, Gilson, Hildebrand, Marcel, Swinburne, or Spinoza and Kołakowski. The complete negation of the achievements of these philosophers and their way of practicing philosophy can easily mean only an ideological absolutization of the non-philosophical and non-Christian inspirations and prejudices. As there is ground for talking about the Hellenization of Christianity, so can we talk even more convincingly about the Christianization of philosophy. On the overt and conscious influence of Christianity on philosophers and philosophy, see the excellent work of X. Tilliette, *Christ of the Philosophers. Prolegomena to Philosophical Christology*, trans. A. Ziernicki, Krakow 1996.

⁴ This order of the development of philosophy is the matrix for his most important and comprehensive philosophical work, *Insight*. This work, which was originally intended to be only a philosophical foundation for his *Method in Theology*, grew into a separate work of almost eight hundred pages and was the foundation for his other philosophical and theological works. See B. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London 1983, and *Method in Theology*, London 1975 (Polish translation by A. Bronk).

of his attention, together with his way of cognizing and understanding, hence his main philosophical work is called *Insight*, “an act of understanding”. His theory of the human spirit, and thus of human cognition, determines the shape of the entirety of his philosophy – it is its cornerstone. This article is concerned with the nucleus of Lonergan’s philosophy. In this way, the heart of his philosophy can become a good introduction as well as a key to his thought.

This article is a synthesis, which Lonergan has never done himself. It is based on everything he wrote and it is a presentation enriched with conclusions resulting from over thirty years of my dealing with his thought (one of them is the diagram of the structure of the spirit at the end of the article). At first, Lonergan himself spoke only of three levels of *cognitional structure*, and then, in accord with the existential turn in his thought, he added the level of responsibility and religious experience. Together, these levels form a whole, which can be legitimately called the structure of the human spirit.

The main part of this presentation discusses respectively those five levels of spirit, their inner dynamism and connection, and shows the most important conclusions about the spirit’s cognizing and living – the so-called “transcendental precepts.” It is a presentation only of the most important data regarding this structure. In fact, it is just an outline. A broader and more comprehensive discussion of the epistemological and metaphysical elements of this theory and the conclusions drawn thereof, will be the subject of separate articles. Those conclusions are particularly important in creating the philosophy of cognition and metaphysics.⁵

1. The Five Levels of the Human Spirit

Lonergan’s anthropological turn concerns, *inter alia*, his putting of the consciousness of the existential subject, rather than its metaphysical elements, at the beginning of phenomenological investigation. Here, at least temporarily, talking about the soul – the traditional way of inferring – is put aside: from the objects

⁵ On this subject, see also my doctoral dissertations: *The Transcendental Way to God according to Bernard Lonergan*, Frankfurt am Main / Bern New York Paris 1991, pp. 31–66 and 135–231 and *Grace and Freedom. Grace in the Bible, the Teaching of the Church and Contemporary Theology*, Krakow 1997, pp. 240–262 and my habilitation thesis *In Search of Certainty. An Attempt at Transcendental Grounding of Metaphysics in the Philosophies of Emerich Coreth and Bernard Lonergan*, Kraków 2010, pp. 235–273.

of acts about acts, from acts about the powers and potentialities of the soul, from the potency about the essence of the soul.⁶

The study of the subject assumes initially not a metaphysical but an intentional analysis of consciousness. In order not to limit and not to resolve, in a premature and unjustified way, any of the philosophical questions, Lonergan defines the subject of consciousness, the knowing subject, as a person who performs certain types of activities, such as perceiving, formulating and judging.⁷ Thus, for example, the question of the objectivity of cognition, the question of the availability of the subject for the object (which is the essence of the so-called Kantian critical problem) is not yet resolved here, it is a completely neutral point of departure.

Lonergan, continuing the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical tradition, remaining faithful to it and relying primarily on the source self-experience of a human being, as well as on the introspection of consciousness and its phenomenological-transcendental description, states that in a human being one can distinguish essentially four “levels” of consciousness, of intentionality in a person’s spiritual orientation to the world. These “levels” must of course be understood metaphorically as an orientation tool, since the extra-spatial spirit cannot be adequately understood in spatial terms and one might as well speak of the “areas” of consciousness.

“There is the empirical level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move. There is an intellectual level on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression. There is the rational level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgment on the truth or falsity, certainty, or probability,

⁶ As Lonergan writes: “The study of the subject is quite different, for it is the study of oneself inasmuch as one is conscious. It prescind from the soul, its essence, its potencies, its habits, for none of these is given in consciousness. It attends to operations and to their center and source which is the self.” (*The Subject*, in: B. Lonergan, *A Second Collection by Bernard Lonergan S.J.*, ed. W.F. Ryan, B.J. Tyrrell, Philadelphia 1974, p. 69–86, 73 ff.). This procedure was prepared through the work of *Verbum* in which Lonergan demonstrated that the doctrine of St. Thomas about the soul and its powers, although expressed in a metaphysical language, was nevertheless based on an accurate introspection of consciousness. See *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (ed. D. B. Burrell, C. S. C.), Notre Dame 1967, p. 75, and G. B. Sala, *Die Introspektion als Schlüssel zur Erkenntnislehre des hl. Thomas von Aquin*, “Theologie und Philosophie” 49 (1974), pp. 477–482.

⁷ See B. Lonergan, *Understanding and Being: An Introduction and Companion to Insight. The Halifax Lectures by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Elizabeth A. Morelli, M. D. Morelli, New York–Toronto 1980, p. 164.

of a statement. There is the responsible level on which we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.”⁸

At each level there are further basic steps of the cognitive process and spiritual life. At the empirical level, there is external and internal experience that provides sensory and awareness data. The data itself does not yet provide an obvious solution to the question of truth, objectivity, and existence. It is simply directly offered to consciousness, and in this fact of being-directly present it is unquestionable, but undefined as to its meaning. It is like a stream of constantly changing images in a kaleidoscope, the meaning of which is not clear to us, but which nevertheless constitutes indispensable material for further activities of the spirit.

Of course, the flow of data alone is not enough for us -we want to understand its meaning, its internal connection, order, and the knowable unity of the relations present in its diversity and multiplicity. By making these attempts, we are already moving to the second level – the intellectual level. If these efforts are successful, we come to an understanding, the intellectual “insight” (*Einsicht*), which is the understanding of the nature of things and it plays a crucial and decisive role in the entire cognitive process. It is like a hinge on which everything turns (hence Lonergan’s main philosophical work is called *Insight*, which is a term he uses most often). The work of the intellect here is similar to the work of a detective who, on the basis of (always incomplete) evidence and clues, attempts to identify the perpetrator, or to the work of an archaeologist who, from the broken pieces or fragments of a pitcher or mosaic, wants to assemble those objects anew. The discovery of the whole, the unity that consists of these fragments and from which they emerge? is an act of understanding. It is the grasping of unity in an empirical multiplicity.

The creative nature of the act of understanding needs to be emphasized here. Apart from perhaps the simplest cognizing, it is not a mechanical grasping of the essence in which the form of the object “transpires” through data. Under no circumstances is this a copy, or a mechanical photograph. If that were the case, cognition would be a matter of having a good look at, and an act of understanding would be infallible, with the infallibility of a copy. Of course, cognition is related to data, it must be based on it, it is not a liberal creativity,

⁸ B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, London 1975, p. 9. Cf. W. G. Shaughnessy, *The Subject in the Transcendental Method of Bernard Lonergan*, in: *Faculta Eclesiástica de Filosofía Universidad de Navarra, Excerpta e Dissertationibus in Philosophia*, Pamplona 1992, pp. 229–348, 270–273.

but at the same time, its creation requires an irreplaceable contribution of the intellect, a creative contribution that is not only the use of ready-made forms.⁹ The object is not given but given as a task. Its internal structure is, to a large extent, a construct of the intellect that contains some element of creativity.

To express, to communicate the act of understanding, you need to create a notion that is based on it. The very act of understanding is not a notion yet, but its source and base. It also explains the possibility of change, correction, and development of notions in accord with the change, correction, development of the acts of understanding from which they come. Apart from notions, the acts of understanding, especially the more complex ones, are hypotheses that are logically correct combinations of notions. Both acts of understanding, as well as notions and hypotheses, can be original, fascinating, ideas, giving (sometimes after a long search) great joy and the ‘relief’ of discovery (which everyone knows and which is particularly well expressed by Archimedes’ exclamation: Eureka!, i.e. I discovered!), but they do not have to be real, they do not have to meet reality genuinely! That is why the act of understanding, despite it being a key event in the process of cognition, is not its end since the question of truth is resolved not on the intellectual but on the rational one.. The act of understanding itself has a hypothetical status and only further research can determine to what extent this hypothesis is consistent with reality.

⁹ As Lonergan writes: “It has been seen that insight goes beyond images and data by adding intelligible unities and correlations and frequencies, which, indeed, contain a reference to images or data but, nonetheless, add a component to knowledge that does not exist actually on the level of sense or imagination.” (*Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London 1983, p. 311).¹¹ Here Lonergan aptly states: “Insights of themselves are neither true nor false. All that is relevant to insights is that you get them, and whether they are true or false is always a further question” (B. Lonergan, *Understanding and Being. An Introduction and Companion to Insight. The Halifax Lectures by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Elizabeth A. Morelli, M. D. Morelli, New York–Toronto 1980, p. 307). You can see how Lonergan’s position on the hypothetical nature of insight is consistent with that of Karl Popper, who stated, *inter alia*: “The Kantian solution to the problem is well known. He assumed – I think rightly – that the world as we know it is our interpretation of observable facts in the light of theories, we invent ourselves. As Kant put it: ‘Our intellect does not derive laws from nature but imposes them on nature.’ Even if I consider this formulation to be essentially correct, I feel that it is a bit too radical, so I would like to present it in the following, altered form: “Our intellect does not derive its laws from nature, but tries – with varying success – to impose laws that it freely invents. This is what the difference consists in” (K. R. Popper, *The Cognitive Status of Science and Metaphysics*, Znak 285 (1978), pp. 367–387, 376, cf. K. R. Popper, *The Road to Knowledge. Guesses and Refutations*, trans. by S. Amsterdamski, Warsaw 1999, p. 325).

If at the intellectual level we ask: what is it? why? what for?, then on a rational level we ask: does it exist? does it really exist? does it exist *in this way?*; or else: is the act of understanding at the second level correct? can the word 'is' be attached to it in an apodictic sense? can it pass from the status of a hypothesis to that of a judgement? The answer to this is again the act of understanding, which Lonergan, by contrast to the act of understanding at the intellectual level referred to as direct or introspective, calls an act of reflection.¹⁰ The direct act of understanding captures cognizable units, relationships between data, their structures, while the reflective act of understanding determines the connection of these relationships and structures to data. In order for a direct act of understanding to become a judgment, two things are required: first, to discover all the necessary conditions (which usually concern the occurrence of certain data) and, second, to establish that these conditions are truly met.¹¹ Both are the work of reflective acts of understanding that are similarly receptive and creative at the same time as direct acts of understanding on the intellectual level.

It is necessary to emphasize the fundamental lack of ultimate certainty that usually occurs in our judgements (except for the judgements regarding the most basic facts, especially in the field of metaphysics). In order to issue a judgement, we must first establish all its necessary conditions, clarify all serious problems, questions, and doubts related to it, and thus indicate all data that must be present in the experience in order to be able to issue a judgment based on them.

¹⁰ *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (ed. D. B. Burrell, C. S. C.), Notre Dame 1967, p. 47 n. 65.

¹¹ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London 1983, p. 35, 358, 380. Prof. G. Sala explains the way in which a judgment comes into being on the following example: "Let us take a concrete judgment of fact, for it is through such judgments that we have access to reality – for example. 'Our house porter's car has just arrived'. In a judgment of fact, the link between conditioned and conditions is established by the direct insight that brings about the shift from data to concept (that is, to the interpretation of the data). More precisely, by the correct insight, for it is in any case the insight from which the mental synthesis proceeds. Has the insight taken into account all the relevant data (relevant for the limited, particular point of view from which the question about real has been posed), so that no further datum is given that could call this interpretation, this concept, into question? If so, then the fulfilment of the conditions consists in the actually given data of sense, as in our example, or of consciousness, if the factual judgment is about oneself?" (G. B. Sala, *Intentionality versus Intuition*, in: *Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, ed. R. M. Doran, trans. J. Spoerl, Toronto/Buffalo/London 1994, pp. 80–101, 95. The article originally published in German as G. B. Sala, *Intentionalität contra Intuition*, "Theologie und Philosophie" 59 (1984), pp. 249–264, 260.) Of course, if data is changed or enriched, then based on it, insight and judgement must change accordingly.

It is enough if all the necessary conditions are met. The main problem, however, is the lack of a universal method, a system that can point reliably to all such conditions. The search for them can only partially be a matter of systematics (still, always limited). To a large extent it is also always the result of the activity of the subject, a creative idea which, even if correct, does not exhaust the list of conditions. The indication of certain conditions may be even unattainable for the subject because it may, for example, require a significant expansion of personal knowledge, or of the knowledge of the cultural circle in which one lives and to which one is limited. This fact is the cause of a certain amount of uncertainty present in most judgments, but it is also the source of possibilities of their correction and development, according to the new conditions that will be discovered. Of course, it may be possible – and probably often is – that there are necessary conditions of judgment that are unknown to us or even known to us, but we are unable to verify if they are fulfilled. These conditions, regardless of our current unsurpassable ignorance, can still be met – and probably are often met – but we cannot know it, and therefore we cannot fully control the correctness of our judgment. The uncertainty of the judgment issued by a being as finite and limited as a human being remains, and probably must (will?) remain.¹²

¹² In my habilitation thesis, I point out that: “in the context of analogous investigations, this is what Karl Popper says about trusting the scientific cognition: ‘Science does not rest on unshakable foundations. The bold structure of scientific theories seems to rise from the swamp. It resembles a building erected on pillars driven into this swamp from above, but not reaching any natural or “given” base. We do not stop driving the poles because we have reached hard ground. We simply stop when we find that they are stuck firmly enough to at least temporarily support the structure’ (K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, trans. by U. Niklas, Warsaw 2002, p. 93). Based on our analysis, we can say that these words express the fundamental truth not only of the philosophy of science, but also of epistemology and the whole of philosophy. It is truly so. Only the word “swamp” would have to be replaced here with the word “ground”. It “knows too much”, assumes too much and decides too much, after all, in our knowledge we often do not even know whether we are in a swamp or on a rock, so we cannot exclude the rock in advance. We just have to erect the building of our knowledge so that we have somewhere to “spiritually” live, but often we are not able to determine whether the land on which we are building will bear the weight of the building. We are like military pioneers who must build a bridge but have neither the tools nor the time to sufficiently check that the banks of the river will bear the weight of its bridgeheads. We also stop “hammering the poles” not always because “we decided that they are stuck firmly enough”, but simply because physically we cannot do any more, we no longer have time, strength and resources – we must leave the work of further strengthening to others, maybe even to the next generation. The reason for ending the search may also be (often very rightly) the urge of others for us to start to ‘pour foundations’ and ‘construct buildings. We cannot act otherwise, but we should also not be surprised that as an inevitable consequence of such a method of building, we regularly

Issuing a judgment, stating that things are in this way and not in a different one, closes the process of cognition, and is the culmination of the work of reason. It is those first three levels of spirit that form together what is traditionally called reason, intellect, and cognitive power. However, as we know well, this is not the end of a spiritual life. To be the subject does not only mean to cognize but also to act – to exist means to act. Cognition shows many options for action, which are assessed, considered, and selected at the fourth level, the level of responsibility, i.e. the level of a personal response to cognition. In Lonerganian terms, this level corresponds to what is traditionally called the will and the heart. The subject makes his/her decisions here based on cognition but is not determined, or enslaved, by it. In his/her decisions, to some extent, he/she remains autonomous and free from it. In a human being (at least to some extent) there is no automatism, no determinism between cognition and action, there is no deterministic transition (as in a computer, for example) from specific impulses to a course of action that is always strictly defined.

In a human being, between knowledge and action, there is a discontinuity, a gap, or rather a chasm, an abyss of freedom. A human being is conditioned, but not determined by his/her own knowledge, he/she is not forced to choose either the best variant, nor the worst, or any other: he/she is free.¹³ Moreover, indecision making, as in the act of understanding on the second and third levels, there is a moment of creativity, and thus, also of unpredictability. Certainly, values appeal to a human being to choose the best, the optimal, but they do not enslave us. The main ethical principle, the root of all ethics – be faithful to your cognition (even if this cognition is fallible and must be constantly open to correction and development) – always finds an imperfect and uncertain realizer

experience a catastrophe of construction in our knowledge; a lot, or even everything, sometimes collapses, and the ground again turns out to be too weak. We cannot do otherwise, we are not able to explore the ground to the bottom, the certainty of absolute knowledge is not available to us. In this situation, it is even surprising that we accomplish so much after all that perhaps sometimes we can come quite close to being and its truth, even if we are not able to reliably prove that what we discover is true. Apparently, we have been given quite decent and efficient cognitive faculties. This sentence was not too clear. The problem is when we can 'acknowledge' that 'the piles, at least temporarily, can support the structure'. The question of the moment and of the legitimacy of this 'acknowledgement' is the key issue in every cognition and its theory." (D. Oko, *In Search of Certainty. An Attempt at Transcendental Grounding of Metaphysics in the Philosophies of Emerich Coreth and Bernard Lonergan*, Kraków 2010, p. 272).

¹³ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Second Lecture: Religious Knowledge*, in: *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, S. J., (ed. F. E. Crowe), London 1985, p. 132.

in a human being. A human being chooses freely, and this is his/her greatness, but also his tragic nature. Thanks to freedom, one can define oneself, be more, co-create oneself and create *novum*, new values in the world, but one can also rebel against values, choose against oneself against values and humiliate and degrade oneself. A human being is attracted to values by objective cognition and feelings arising at this level, which are the most subjective responses to values, but one is distracted by various erroneous cognitions and resentments, the negative consequences of certain conditions and previous decisions.¹⁴ However, in this area where one is indeed free, decisions are no longer explained by any conditions, for if free decisions could be reduced to some conditions explained by them, they would not be free, they would be simply consequences of the conditions, and they would thus be determined. Free decision, both good and bad, is a radically new beginning in the network of cause and effect chains existing in the world, it is like a creation out of nothing, *creatio ex nihilo*.¹⁵

However, the fourth level is not the last or the highest level. In the context of a religious experience, we must speak about a fifth level of the human spirit. It is actually the fourth level, but profoundly transformed by this experience and therefore in the table at the end of this article it is separated by a dotted line from the fourth level – to indicate its distinctive character from the lower, “natural” levels.¹⁶ It is the pinnacle of the human spirit, *apex animae*, a transformed

¹⁴ After Scheler and Hildebrand, Lonergan emphasizes the enormous role of feelings in learning about values and decision making (cf. e.g. *Method in Theology*, London 1975, pp. 30–32, and “An Interview with Fr. Bernard Lonergan,” SJ, in: *A Second Collection, A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, (ed. W. F. Ryan, B. J. Tyrrell), Philadelphia 1974, pp. 209–230, 223). Feelings are by no means either blind or irrational. They are the most rational response to the cognition that is currently in the field of consciousness, or which at least prevails there. Feelings relate to the most personal experience, they reflect cognition. If there is (irrational) emotional chaos, it is usually not because of feelings, but it is a sign and consequence of a cognitive chaos, a disturbance in the proportion of cognition. Therefore, the path to healing the world of feelings leads through the healing of the world of cognition. Feelings in themselves, insofar as they are the result of a process independent of us, are just as neutral, “innocent” as data at the empirical level.

¹⁵ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London 1983, p. 666 f.; see also M. Vertin, *Philosophy of God, Theology, and the Problems of Evil*, “Laval theologique et philosophique” 37 (1981), p. 36. About the inexplicability of freedom. 15–31; G. A. McCool, *The Philosophical Theology of Rahner and Lonergan*, in: R. J. Roth (ed.), *God Knowable and Unknowable*, New York 1973, pp. 123–157, and my thesis: D. Oko, *Grace and Freedom. Grace in the Bible, the Teaching of the Church and Contemporary Theology*, Kraków 1997, p. 276.

¹⁶ Cf. B. Lonergan, *A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion*, in: B. Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, (ed. F. E. Crowe), London 1985, pp. 202–223,

heart, the highest realization of the perfection of the human person. We can talk about this experience without going into the field of theology because the mere philosophical analysis of the data of contemporary religious studies allows us to speak of a certain ideal type, a model of religious experience, occurring in all great religions.¹⁷ In the highest, purest forms of a religious experience (which for Christians is always an experience of grace), deity is experienced as the highest reality, goodness, truth, holiness, as the reality that is the fulfillment of the infinite human striving for cognitive and moral self-transcendence; the fulfillment of a human striving for truth, goodness and beauty. This experience transforms the subject thoroughly, gives inner integration, peace of heart and an authentic love of God and of one's neighbor.

Sometimes, this experience means a thorough, existential conversion, usually encompassing a moral, cognitive and religious conversion which overthrows and inverts previous horizons and hierarchies, turning what was important so far into invalid, and the unimportant into important.¹⁸ Lonergan describes this new reality beautifully as *being-in-love-with-God* where the combination of several words into one whole is to remind us of the complexity of this experience, and also of its uniqueness and separateness – about its fundamental qualitative difference from other experiences. This experience is free. It is not something that the subject could work out in any way. One can only open up to it, accept it, and in the first place, spiritually purify oneself and prepare a place for it.¹⁹

202; B. Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, Philadelphia 1973, p. 38 and *Method in Theology*, London 1975, p. 106, 268.

¹⁷ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Religious Commitment*, in: J. Papin (ed.), *The Pilgrim People: A Vision with Hope*, Villanova 1970, pp. 44–69, 47 and B. Lonergan, *A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion*, in: B. Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, S. J., (ed. F. E. Crowe), London 1985, pp. 202–223, 217.

¹⁸ Cf. B. Lonergan, *A Second Lecture: Religious Knowledge*, in: *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, S. J., (ed. F. E. Crowe), London 1985, pp. 129–145, 133; B. Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, Philadelphia 1973, p. 9; B. Lonergan, *Religious Commitment*, in: J. Papin (ed.), *The Pilgrim People: A Vision with Hope*, Villanova 1970, pp. 44–69, 57.

¹⁹ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Openness and Religious Experience*, in: *Collection: Papers by Bernard JF Lonergan, SJ*, (ed. F. E. Crowe, R. M. Doran), Toronto 1988, p. 187. It can be said that this spiritual preparation is like cleaning, emptying the deck of an aircraft carrier so that a plane could land on it. An aircraft carrier is designed to 'receive' planes, that is its purpose, otherwise it does not make sense. Therefore, it is to be prepared to 'receive' planes, especially its deck is to be cleaned, but it cannot create planes itself, it can only 'receive' them.

2. The Inner Unity and the Dynamism of the Structure

Those five levels of consciousness constitute one closely related whole, one permanent and unchanging spiritual structure, whose unity is created and carried out through an unlimited outward movement of the human spirit, an unlimited intentionality of consciousness, an unlimited desire to know and be. Because the subject wants to get to know more and always be more, one constantly goes further through activities at particular levels, transcends, self-transcends cognitively (if one exceeds the limits of one's knowledge) and morally (if one surpasses individual interests). It is this unlimited intentionality that causes the individual levels to be 'sublated' within themselves, and this is in the Rahnerian, not Hegelian, sense.²⁰ Lower levels and the effects of their activities are integrated into the higher ones while maintaining their distinctiveness but modifying their goals and improving their course. The spiritual process of development beyond the gift of a religious experience always starts at the bottom to reach the highest level and thus transforms and enriches the entire subject. Lower levels determine higher levels, but also vice versa, they are conditioned by the latter. There is also no sharp dualism of the spirit, or dualism of mind and heart, but there is a mutual enrichment, exchange, flow, and influence. The changes and the development on any of the levels, as well as regression and degradation, cause positive or negative changes on each of the other levels. Religious experience, exerts, in particular, a great influence on the lower levels so that while the normal development at those levels is from bottom to top, in this case it is from top to bottom.²¹

Between reason and the heart there is by nature, or there should not be any opposition, contradiction, struggle, but the supreme unity, integration, and

²⁰ Lonergan writes on this subject thus: "I shall introduce the notion of sublation, not exactly in Hegel's sense, but rather in a sense employed by Karl Rahner. Let us distinguish, then, between a sublating set of operations and a sublated set. The sublating set introduces operations that differ in kind from those in the sublated set; it finds among the new operations both a new basis for operating and new goals to be achieved; while it directs operations in the sublated set to the new goals, so far from interfering with them or stunting them, it preserves them in their integrity, it vastly extends their relevance, and it perfects their performance." (*Religious Commitment*, in: J. Papin (ed.), *The Pilgrim People: A Vision with Hope*, Villanova 1970, pp. 44–69, 52) In the Hegelian sense, sublation would mean the complete disappearance of two separate realities, thesis and antithesis, and their dissolution into synthesis.

²¹ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Questionnaire on Philosophy*, "Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies" 2 (1984), pp. 1–35, 10.

exchange as it is in the bloodstream connection between the head and the heart. The more a human being gets to know the more he/she should affirm, love and confirm with his/her choices what he/she knows. Thus, through the broadened base of cognition and its acceptance, he/she should inspire, encourage, prepare and, if necessary, also cleanse, for further knowledge, accelerate the making of those choices and multiply them.²² What is intellectual and what is existential should constitute the greatest unity in a human being. Therefore, in time, Lonergan furthermore extends his initial Thomistic rationalism to Augustinian-Pascal volitivism and affectivity –in time granting to it the existential primacy.²³ Such an understanding of the spirit is also the most comprehensive and holistic, and it makes it possible to avoid the extremity of both empiricism, which does not appreciate the higher levels of the spirit; idealism which does not appreciate the first level (or directly negates it); and rationalism, which does not appreciate both the lowest and the highest two levels.

3. The Transcendental Precepts

The principles of the spiritual life ensue from the nature of a human being. Lonergan calls the most important of these principles the transcendental precepts. They are transcendental both in the Kantian sense, because they result from the

²² On the subject of the spiritual structure of a human being as a whole see my work: *The Transcendental Way to God according to Bernard Lonergan*, Frankfurt am Main/Bern/New York/Paris 1991, pp. 58–66, 139–149; B. Lonergan, *Cognitional Structure*, in: *Collection. Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, (ed. F. E. Crowe, R. M. Doran), Toronto 1988, pp. 205–221; B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, London 1975, pp. 13, 340; B. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London 1983, pp. 275, 346; B. Lonergan, *A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion*, in: B. Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, (ed. F. E. Crowe), London 1985, pp. 202–223, 210; B. Lonergan, *Unity and Plurality: The Coherence of Christian Truth*, in: *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, (ed. F. E. Crowe), London 1985, p. 246; B. Lonergan, *Natural Right and Historical Mindedness*, B. Lonergan, p. 173; B. Lonergan, *Healing and Creating in History*, p. 105; B. Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, Philadelphia 1973, p. 43; B. Lonergan, *Theories and Inquiry: Responses to a Symposium*, in: B. Lonergan, *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, (ed. W. F. Ryan, B. J. Tyrrell), Philadelphia 1974, p. 38; B. Lonergan, *Revolution in Catholic Theology*, p. 236.

²³ Cf. B. Lonergan, *The Subject*, in: B. Lonergan, *A Second Collection by Bernard Lonergan S.J.*, ed. W.F. Ryan, B.J. Tyrrell, Philadelphia 1974, p. 69–86, pp. 84, 25, cf. B. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London 1983, p. 407.

study of cognition (and the life of the spirit) to the extent *a priori* is possible, and also in the scholastic, universal, sense because they concern the whole of our cognition. If this is the structure of our spirit, then everything we know is known by its activities, which should be performed according to general precepts thus affecting the totality of cognition. Those precepts, therefore, are transcendental. To each of the levels corresponds one main transcendental precept, and all the precepts together form the framework of the transcendental method, which – with the necessary modifications and taking into account an appropriate development – should constitute the core of each detailed method of cognizing and of the life of the spirit.

Those precepts are needed because our activities are not automatic and do not guarantee in themselves either the truth or the right decision-making. The actions of each level can be performed better or worse, can contribute to achieving truth and goodness, but they can also be the source of error. And thus, at the empirical level, the source of error, apart from the illusions of the senses, may be primarily the non-representativeness of the data, the lack of some important data, or a wrong proportion.²⁴ The act of understanding is then as if doomed to error. Hence, the transcendental precept here reads: “Be attentive,” that is, try to gather as much reliable data as possible from the best possible sources. The more data you have access to, the more appropriate the proportions are, the more chances you have for the right act of understanding.

At the second and third levels, error may be primarily due to the creative nature of direct and reflective acts of understanding, which can or do not have to correspond to the meaning of data. An additional source of error can be the rejection (even if subconscious) or blocking of the emerging act of understanding that does not suit the subject, because, for example, he/she does not agree with other, already well-established judgements (as it is, for example, with the act of an understanding of the virtues of one’s opponent).²⁵ The transcendental precept on the second level is: “Be intelligent”, i.e. be unconditionally open to every even that which is for you the most unpleasant act of understanding – that is, try as much as possible and understand as soon as possible. After all, intelligence is the measure of the speed of understanding.

²⁴ See B. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London 1983, p. 407. A good example of a mistake that may arise here is the assessment of the economy of a communist country based on its propaganda.

²⁵ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London 1983, p. 191.

On the third level, however, the transcendental precept is: “Be reasonable”, that is, issue your judgments as based on the largest possible database. Before you issue a judgement, try to find all the necessary conditions and be sure of their fulfillment. Keep the golden ratio between the hasty, insufficiently grounded judgments and meticulous judgments which take too long, because all the conditions of judgement will usually be neither found nor fulfilled. Besides, judgement usually appears as shrouded in doubts, even in a whole host of them. We can give the best judgment if we answer all doubts positively. However, the problem usually is that due to various restrictions, e.g. physiological, financial, technological or of time, we are not able to do it in a complete way. Also, we can have no doubts while we should have them, but because of the limitations in knowledge, culture, or ability, we do not have them. In cases when we do not fully clarify the doubts that we should have, our judgement is burdened with a serious dose of uncertainty, may be even incorrect and require correction, and this is the situation of the vast majority of our judgements.²⁶ That is why the more we were unable to answer the doubts related to them, the more we should issue our judgments with humbleness and modesty.

On the fourth level, the main source of error may be infidelity to one’s own cognition, a conscious and free rebellion against the truth and goodness that have been given to us in the process of cognition. This rebellion is destructive to all other levels because a decision that goes against cognition sooner or later leads to a distortion that would fit a false decision. A human being cannot live

²⁶ The diagnostic situation of medical doctors in different countries and situations can be a clear example of various options for resolving doubts. US doctors treating presidents or billionaires have the best conditions for this because they have the best medical devices at their disposal since medicine in this country is at the highest level and is the most invested in. Doctors in every other country where the equipment in hospitals is usually at a lower level will be in a worse situation, just like those in the American army in a field hospital during a battle. They will no longer have a complete set of equipment, and most of all they will not have the time and energy to thoroughly examine all injured soldiers. They will therefore have to issue hasty judgments regarding injuries with a greater possibility of error, but those will be necessary as the suspension of the judgments as for the diagnosis would lead to the deterioration of many soldiers, and even to death. Doctors in the poorest African countries will be in a worse situation – there, the only technical assistance in diagnosing will often be just medical headphones. However, an African shaman will be in an even worse situation, as he will not have much doubt about his diagnosis, including whether he should treat the ill at all. However, his mental horizon will probably not allow for such doubts to arise. It would require a deep cultural breakthrough – a paradigm shift – for a much better, more scientific and developed seeing of the problem. See also A. Beards, *Method in Metaphysics. Lonergan and the Future of Analytical Philosophy*, Toronto / Buffalo / London 2008, pp. 38–60 and 212–217.

long in a state of internal cleavage, breakup, as he/she perhaps needs a pulled-up, falsified, internal unity. If one does not adjust one's decisions to the truth of cognition, one will inevitably try to deny this truth according to the falsehood of one's decisions (according to the saying: if you do not live as you believe, you will believe as you live). Hence, the transcendental precept on this level is: "Be responsible", that is, with your decisions – in all their creativity and novelty – try to respond as well as it is possible to the truth and good that have been given to you, be as faithful to them as possible.

On the fifth level, the general precept is "Love," which is to affirm the value of existence in the most fundamental way. It is more an acknowledgement of the fruit of a religious experience rather than a command. For if this experience is really given to you, if it is present in you, then love is its inevitable, blessed fruit and consequence. However, insofar as you are closed to this experience or it is not given to you, you are not able to love in its original, source sense.²⁷

In general, those five transcendental precepts: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, love, can be summarized in one: "Be open", that is, however much you may not like them, however much they may disturb, question and destroy the existing habits, be unconditionally, optimally open to all data, all acts of understanding and judgment, and finally be open to the action of God in you. As much as you succeed in it, you may hope that your cognition and spiritual life are fruitful, and you will actually come closer to the truth and goodness through them according to Lonergan's golden rule: *objectivity is the fruit of a genuine subjectivity*.²⁸ The extent to which you are true to yourself, to the nature of your cognition and your spiritual life, and thus the extent to which you are authentic in your subjectivity, is the extent to which you are objective. It can be a formula of reconciliation (at least partial) between the traditions of realism and idealism in their unending dispute over objectivity and subjectivity. It can be said that all our cognition is completely subjective, it is, after all, the work of the subject – *subiectum*, and is completely within his/her consciousness. The extent, however, to which it goes beyond these limits, the extent to which it is

²⁷ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, London 1975, pp., 20, 265, 268, and B. Lonergan, *Philosophy of God and Theology*, Philadelphia 1973, pp. 38, 44.

²⁸ B. Lonergan, *Philosophy of God and Theology*, Philadelphia 1973, p. 44; Cf. B. Lonergan, *The Subject*, in: B. Lonergan, *A Second Collection by Bernard Lonergan S.J.*, ed. W.F. Ryan, B.J. Tyrrell, Philadelphia 1974, p. 69–86, 71; G. Sala, *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizontnach E. Coreth und B. Lonergan*, ZKTh 89 (1967), pp. 294–338, 335.

objective, that is, in accord with the object – *obiectum* – is a separate problem.²⁹ However, more on this topic can be said in the next, more extensive studies.

Levels (areas)	Principal activities	Principal effect	Transcendental precepts
II. Heart			<i>General:</i> Be open
5. Level of religious experience (passivity)	Openness to God's action (grace)	Being-in-love-with-God	<i>Detailed:</i> 5. Love
4. Level of responsibility and feelings (activity)	Analysis of possible goals and actions, higher spiritual feelings	Free and creative decision	4. Be responsible (i.e. faithful in creativity)
<i>- Freedom Rift -</i>			
I Reason			
3. Rational level (activity)	Reflection on connecting data with acts of understanding and hypotheses, grasping the fulfillment of conditions (Hypothetical)	(Hypothetical) Judgement	3. Be reasonable
2. Intellectual level (activity)	Investigating, gaining understanding, expressing, formulating the assumptions and consequences of the act of understanding	Insight – Creative act of understanding, notions, and hypothesis	2. Be intelligent
3. Empirical (passivity)	Sensing, imagining, speaking, moving etc.	Sensory data	1. Be attentive

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²⁹ Cf. D. Oko, *In Search of Certainty. An Attempt at Transcendental Grounding of Metaphysics in the Philosophies of Emerich Coreth and Bernard Lonergan*, Kraków 2010, pp. 273–300.

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