METHOD IN ECOLOGY: BERNARD LONERGAN AND CATHOLIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

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by

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ABSTRACT

The central question of this thesis explores what the thought of Canadian Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan may contribute to a Catholic perspective of environmental ethics. In comparison with secular environmental movements, Roman Catholicism has arrived relatively late on the scene to examine formally issues of specifically ecological import from either a theological or academic stance. Catholic ecotheology is still in its formation but offers much potential for effective collaboration among and between both Catholics and non-Catholics. As it stands, the great variety of issues at stake in environmental ethics calls for a multidisciplinary approach involving science, technology, politics, economics, law, education, philosophy, and religion. Finding common ground on which to discuss the issues and prioritize values proves difficult. This thesis explores ways that common ground may be sought both within Catholicism and in the broader secular sphere using Lonergan's three-fold notion of conversion (intellectual, moral, and religious conversion), his notions of the human good and collective responsibility, his method of self-appropriation, and his cognitional theory which claims invariance in the structure and process of knowing. Because the call for change, not just of social systems but also of hearts and minds, is a recurring theme in any environmental ethics, Lonergan's notion of conversion will be crucial to this exploration of common ground.

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Chapter One: Where Are We Going and How Did We Get Here? An Introduction to the Situation

This chapter takes a multi-faceted approach to the issues of environmental ethics. It contains a brief history of the emergence of an environmental awareness in Western consciousness. It then introduces the current, work-in-progress state of Catholic environmental ethics. To get a handle on how this situation came to be, we will also take a look at a general notion of ethics rooted in Western Christianity and how the changing scientific, political, and economic climate may influence public decision-making. An introduction to the thought of philosopher Bernard Lonergan will set the stage for a discussion of where Christian ethics may situate itself at the beginning of a new millennium.

1. A Brief History of Environmental Awareness

While the "environmental crisis" and issues of ecology are at the fore of many public discussions in contemporary Western society, such was not always the case. Widespread environmental consciousness has only emerged in the last half of the twentieth century; yet environmental degradation has been occurring around the world for hundreds of years. While the pollution of the Industrial Revolution in England is an oft-cited example of the large-scale cost of human "progress," damage done to the environment goes back as far as the deforestation of ancient Rome and Greece.[1] 1963 marks perhaps the beginning of the environmental movement with the publication of

Rachel Carson's illuminating work, *Silent Spring*, a book which dealt with the use of chemicals and pesticides in agriculture.[2] International conferences on the environment sprang up in the 1970s, and heightened coverage of ecological disasters like Chernobyl and the Exxon Valdez oil spill gave further impetus to the relevance of environmental movements.[3] Today, although there is still much debate over specific policies and procedures concerning the environment, there is a general public acceptance of the need to keep ecological issues a priority for discussion.

The term "ecology" initially did not hold the public significance it claims today, having been coined by nineteenth-century botanists interested in communities of plants. The notion has since grown to include all manner of life and the necessary interdependence which exists to make the earth the dynamic system that it is. Ecology emphasizes the interconnectedness of systems and literally means "house knowledge" (Greek "*eco-*" meaning "house" and "*-logy*" meaning "logic" or "knowledge").[4] Given the fact that environmental damage has occurred for centuries yet significant concern for the problem goes back only a few decades, one could surmise that we do not possess as much "house knowledge" as we would like to think or else do not use this knowledge wisely. When it comes to matters of the environment, of sustainable development, of conservation, and of healthy living, we are only just realizing the extent to which we

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[1] Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (March 10, 1967) : 1203-1204.
[2] David Suzuki with Amanda McConnell, *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering our Place in Nature*, (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1997), 2; see also Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
[3] Suzuki, 3.
[4] Jane Jacobs, *The Nature of Economies* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2000), 10. See also her notes to chapter one, 152-153, for further explanation of the etymology of the term.

depend upon the self-sustaining order by which the natural environment operates. For millennia the earth and life upon it existed and thrived in the absence of humans. According to a wide range of environmental philosophies, non-human, natural processes do not depend on humans to exist. Human beings, however, are inextricably tied through their bodies and environment to these natural processes. This bond is a necessary condition of our common existence on this earth.[5]

While the environmental movement has had considerable impact on the public's consciousness of environmental issues, there are many questions about its overall effectiveness. Environmental issues often find their context in terms of politics, economics, technology, or law; in other words, there is more at stake in the matter than just preserving, caring for, or respecting the natural world. There is a complex web of relationships between human social systems and the laws, cycles, and processes that govern nature. Sometimes there are conflicts, particularly between the demands of human systems and the sustainability of natural environments and resources. Often, serious impediments face those searching for effective solutions. In the Western world today, many environmental issues are complicated by political and economic factors. One need only look to newspaper headlines highlighting the politics of the Kyoto

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[5] Lonergan's writing contains several notions that can or have been already used in an environmental context. The interconnectedness of human beings and their environment is a theme which runs through much of what is written on ecology, from Gaia Theory to Deep Ecology. Lonergan's understanding of interconnectedness is laid out in his notions of world order and emergent probability. For more on this see chapter four of *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, by Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan,* Volume 3, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) and Michael Shute's article, "Emergent Probability and the Ecofeminist Critique of Hierarchy," in *Lonergan and Feminism,* ed. Cynthia S.W. Crysdale (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). See also Anne Marie Dalton, *A Theology for the Earth: The Contributions of Thomas Berry and Bernard Lonergan*, Religions and Beliefs Series, no. 10 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999).

Protocol, or to disputes between environmentalists and logging or mining corporations, to realize environmental ethics is never about merely the environment.

2. Environmental Ethics and the Relevance of Religion

Environmental ethics inevitably raises questions about meaning. What does the environment mean to us? Does it have any meaning apart from its usefulness to human beings? Are human beings to be considered special creations in nature's order? What values should we let take precedence in our care for and use of the environment? Where does life on earth fit in the bigger picture, and would the answer make any difference to how we live? There are those in the environmental movement who believe that any quest for meaning is frustrated if the questions of ultimate meaning are not also considered. For example, proponents of the Deep Ecology movement profess to take a holistic view of nature, where human beings and nature are understood to hold equal intrinsic value and there is no hierarchy of species. Rather than putting people at the centre of concern, which Deep Ecologists see as an anthropocentrism that has dictated the state of affairs for too long, they suggest taking a creation-centred orientation instead. However, Deep Ecology, according to critic Grover Foley, "rejects distinctions in value, even in terms of sentience."[6] So although Deep Ecology seeks to transform the hearts and minds of humanity, beyond the quick-fixes of technological or political solutions for environmental degradation, critics claim that among the movement's weaknesses is its failure to define new values or address questions of ultimate meaning. Henryk

[6] Grover Foley, "Deep Ecology and Subjectivity," *The Ecologist* 18, no 4/5 (1988) : 120.

Skolimowski claims that without an orientation to ultimate meaning, we will be adrift in deciding practical matters of the environment.[7] He says: "A far reaching ecological conception of the world is incomplete without some form of eco-theology. As Rene Dubois puts it: 'A truly ecological view of the world has religious overtones.'"[8] It is this vein of thought which this thesis will explore. This thesis will contend that any environmental ethics should be open to asking questions of ultimate concern, a focus traditionally reserved for religion, and that because of their natural orientation to such questions of ultimate meaning, religions have a relevance to environmental ethics. Further, it will be suggested that there is more to the matter than simply "religious overtones" as Dubois puts it. Religious differences are foundational differences, differences which fundamentally affect how people understand and operate in the world, and which lead to differences in policies and actions. If we let religious views extend into environmental ethics, how are we to deal with such basic, foundational differences? If religious differences are part of the problem, as scholars such as Lynn White, Jr. have suggested, then addressing religious questions would seem to be an integral part of the solution. In particular, this thesis will examine some general aspects of Catholic ecotheology with a focus on the potential contributions to be made by twentieth century Canadian Catholic philosopher Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan did not write specifically on the environment, but his thought offers some fascinating possibilities for environmental ethics. Lonergan's notion of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion will be of

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[7] Henryk Skolimowski, "Eco-Philosophy and Deep Ecology," *The Ecologist* 18, no 4/5 (1988) : 124. For a more detailed representation of both sides of the debate, see the entire issue of *The Ecologist* 18, no 4/5 (1988).

[8] Skolimowski, "Eco-Philosophy and Deep Ecology," 125.

particular interest, for its potential applicability to Catholic and non-Catholic environmental contexts alike.

From a religious studies perspective, a large part of the conflict in deciding matters of environmental ethics is a lack of effective dialogue. Dialogue must occur between groups informed by religious values and groups whose fields integrally affect the environment such as the various sciences, economics, politics, and secular environmental movements. All of these groups have their own notions about what nature's ends are and what part human beings play in both the betterment and degradation of the environment. All have significant and unique contributions to make. The issue is how to order or organize their contributions in a holistic manner: to take all their concerns into consideration and to effectively deliberate on solutions to the problem. To resolve their often conflicting notions they must not only be willing to discuss the issues across disciplines but also be able to relate from some common ground. This thesis will suggest that common ground may be established by considering the significance of foundational, religious questions embodied in Lonergan's notion of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.

3. Late on the Scene: Catholicism's Foray into Environmental Ethics

When talk of "the environmental crisis" grew to the point of being a matter of general public concern during the 1960s, it was the secular voices which commanded attention and demanded action. Contemporary Western environmentalism existed, and still exists, without substantial religious backing. It appears that only after the secular

world had identified and began to discuss the ecological crisis that Western organized religions began to join the discussion and re-examine their theology. In the West, it was Christian theology which undertook a noticeable self-scrutiny. Up to then, two assumptions about Christianity held sway both inside and outside the Christian Church: that Christianity was dedicated to the transcendent, the afterlife, the kingdom to come, and that, when it did turn its focus to earthly matters, Christianity saw nature as something to subdue and dominate, as commanded early in the book of Genesis (1:28).[9] Given the changing times and society's new focus on the environment, a revision in theology was clearly in order.

The Catholic Church is one example of a Christian religious institution whose ambiguous relationship to the environment is still being sorted out. Until recent times there was little significant contribution on environmental issues from a distinctly Catholic perspective, either within the Catholic community or in the global arena. According to Bernard J. Przewozny, the church's first statements acknowledging the environmental crisis are found in the 1965 document, *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.[10] The remarks are brief, alluding to the environment through the need to regulate human activity so that it harmonizes with God's will and design. While the Vatican's first statements were roughly synchronal with the birth of the environmental movement in the 1960s, there was little subsequent reference to society's burgeoning ecological concerns until recently in the early 1990s.

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[9] "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'" Genesis 1:28, Revised Standard Edition.

Historically, environmental issues have not ranked high on the list of priorities within the Catholic Church. In the face of today's ecological crises the Church's limited official response has prompted a significant number of Catholic theologians to suggest new, more ecologically-centered theologies. These theologies have yet to settle and take firm root in the institutional Church, but they do offer intriguing and potentially viable foundations for a Church looking to remain relevant in the twenty-first century. Catholic ecotheology is thus a relatively new area of study and differences exist among Catholic theologians. Michael H. Barnes, editor of a collection of essays by Christian writers on the ecological crisis, notes that:

> ...for most religious thinkers ecological consciousness is still in formation, still defining itself in relation to specific issues. Ecological aspects of feminism, creation spirituality, sacramental presence, ethics of nature, scripture and tradition, nature and grace are still developing. It is the growth of an ecology of the spirit.[11]

Clearly there are a variety of perspectives, each with a measure of untapped potential, from which to discuss the issues under the aegis of Catholicism; some of these will be taken up in the final chapter of this thesis. However, the religion must also contend with and relate to critics outside the institution.

From the perspective of secular environmentalists the religious viewpoint was, and still is, often seen as being at the root of the problem. This attitude was exemplified by Lynn White Jr.'s famous essay, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," which blames Christianity for a large part of environmental irresponsibility and

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[10] Bernard J. Przewozny, "The Catholic Church and Ecological Concern," in *Concern for Creation: Voices on the Theology of Creation* (Uppsala: Svenska Kyrkans Forskningsrad, 1995), 54.

degradation.[12] White claims that Christianity is excessively anthropocentric; combining anthropocentrism with the biblical doctrine of dominion over the earth, this mindset has informed the West's mistreatment of the earth.[13] White criticizes Christianity for following too closely and narrow-mindedly this biblical exhortation resulting in a false superiority over nature. The response to White's article has been wide and varied, making it a benchmark in the debate over religion's role in ecological matters. It has also served as an impetus for scholars and theologians to dig deeper into ecological ethics.

Yet, while theology is in the process of catching up to contemporary ethical issues, sorting through the ethical debate has not been made any easier on the secular front. North American secular society was born from, and is still residually rooted in, Christian history. White notes that the Scientific and Industrial revolutions, because of their roots in Christian society, have also continued on in the presupposition of human beings' mastery over the earth.[14] Although White's intent is to trace present scientific and technological mindsets of domination and superiority back to Christian anthropocentrism, it stands that regardless of its roots, anthropocentrism of one sort or another still remains. One may surmise from White's remarks that, if we gave up one form of anthropocentrism, covered in the mantle of Christian religion, we traded it in for

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[11] Michael H. Barnes, "Introduction: The Task of This Volume," in *An Ecology of the Spirit: Religious Reflection and Environmental Consciousness*, The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, 1990, vol.36 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 2.

[12] Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." At the same time, White urged Christianity to take role in restoring the balance and so did not condone divorcing religion from either the problem or the solution.

[13] Peter W. Bakken, Joan Gibb Engel, and J. Ronald Engel, eds. *Ecology, Justice, and Christian Faith: A Critical Guide to the Literature*, Bibliographies and Indexes in Religious Studies, no. 36, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1995), 19. A similar interpretation is given by Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 265-266.

[14] Bakken, Gibb Engel, and Engel, 48; see also White, 1206.

another type of anthropocentrism, found in science and technology and secular notions of progress. The Church's anthropocentrism will be discussed in the final chapter. The implications of secular anthropocentrism will be highlighted later in this chapter.

4. Some Issues in Contemporary Decision-Making

Ethics must include both individual and communal contexts. Individuals make personal decisions and communities arrive at consensuses, all in an effort to make sense of the world and live according to some established order. Where does religion fit in today's public decision-making processes? It is a daunting task to discover and choose what is really worthwhile. This is the question of ethics. But there is more to ethics than right choices. An authentic conscience is not content with simply making the choice. Moral living demands that we act in accordance with the choice made. It demands more than a logical consistency of argument; at stake is the more difficult demand of consistency between what we know and value and what we do. This pertains to both an individual and a communal context, and to this perennial challenge contemporary thought adds its own complications. Being moral, both personally and communally, is complicated by the pluralism of contemporary cultures and philosophies which would stake a claim in shaping our moral horizon. The prevailing voices in Western modern culture are post-modern, relativist, pluralist, liberal, and secularist.[15] Yet they are one in

[15] See Don Cupitt, *The Sea of Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994) for an introduction to the emergence of secularism and its subsequent effect on Western Christianity. One may also look to the "masters of suspicion," who emerged for late 19th and early 20th century thought, such as Feuerbach, Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, who formed the modern foundation for criticism and skepticism of religion. Sallie McFague gives a concise summary of postmodernity in *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 26; see also Elizabeth A. Morelli,

their criticism of religious traditionalism. Their predominate and unifying characteristic is the encouragement of individualism. Each person is left to discover his or her own foundations.

Ethics poses the question to the decision-maker: "Where are you headed and how will you get there?" This may work well in the individual's private sphere but what are we to do about common concerns? What are the choices? Do we settle issues by public polls and referenda? Is it by some balance of self-interests? Was Thrasymachus, Plato's adversary in the *Republic*, on the mark when he argued that, in the end, might makes right? Ethics is more than individual action; that it is a frequent topic in the public sphere is evidence enough of its relevance to collective activity. Furthermore, as ethicist Peter Singer notes, ethics by its nature is oriented to ultimate questions: from the biblical writers to Kant, Hume, Bentham, Rawls, Sartre, and Habermas, despite their distinct differences, all agree that ethics is a search for a normative point of view. It goes beyond a personal sense of "I" and "you" to include issues of the common good.[16] Once we raise the question of the common good we are left to wonder on what basis we can accomplish an effective consensus that will adequately direct efforts to solve common social problems. The thought of Bernard Lonergan, to be introduced later in this chapter, examines the interrelation between personal and public decision-making and claims that there is a normative basis for making decisions, a claim which will serve as a foundation for an examination of contemporary Catholic environmental ethics.

"Women's Intuition: A Lonerganian Analysis," in *Lonergan and Feminism*, ed. Cynthia S.W. Crysdale (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 78-79.

[16] Singer, 11-12.

5. How Do Science and Religion Relate?

Prior to the eighteenth century, the framework for deliberation in European and North American society was ultimately in the context of organized religion. Even so, one must keep in mind the Catholic-Protestant split since the Reformation, as well as the increasing number of denominations since then wishing to be recognized within Christianity. Thus, we would have to go back prior to the Reformation to find an institutionalized unity in ethics; the last five hundred years have seen the steady erosion and dissolution of the cultural unity embodied spiritually in the Roman Catholic Church and politically in the Holy Roman empire. Now the Holy Roman empire is reduced to the postage stamp-size state, Vatican City. Where once religion was the major avenue for exploring the most basic and literally universal cosmological and existential questions, it now competes with the developments of science and the emergence of the culture of scientism for the attentions of a Western audience. Science involves data collection, methodical investigation of measurable processes, experimentation, postulating of underlying principles, and identification of regularity in nature. It seeks concrete judgments of fact and generalizations regarding the systematic relation of one thing to another.[17] However, while science has a lot to say about how to discover facts and make proper explanations, it remains silent on what courses of action to take once the facts are known and the situation is explained. Thus science has not been able (and, as will be

[17] Frank Budenholzer, "Science and Religion: Seeking a Common Horizon," *Zygon* 19, no 3 (September 1984) : 350; also Gerald L. Schroeder, *The Science of God: The Convergence of Scientific and Biblical Wisdom* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997) 5.

argued, by its nature it simply is not able) to answer certain deep and pervading questions about our origins and our place in the universe. So while science has replaced religion as a predominate authority on how the world works, it has not been able to provide the complete common framework we require for sorting out and deliberating about common ethical concerns.

Since the scientific revolution of the 17th century, many people have perceived science and religion to be at loggerheads.[18] One need only look to the upheaval which Galileo's refinement of the Copernican heliocentric model of the solar system caused in his geocentric and religiously-steeped society. This was a muddying of the boundary between heaven and earth, to consider our globe as just another rock hurtling around the sun. So too was Darwin's theory of evolution perceived as a challenge to Christian interpretations of creation. Although both Galileo and Darwin and countless scientists like them never intended their discoveries to so oppose traditional religious outlooks, each scientific discovery would seem to drive a wedge between what is termed as a rational inquiry about the world and a faith-filled understanding of creation. If, as Butterfield argues, the scientific evolution "outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of Medieval Christendom,"[19] then

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[18] C.P. Snow was one of the influential contributors on this topic; see Charles Percy Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution: The Rede Lecture* (Cambridge: University Press, 1959). Snow, like Lynn White, Jr., wrote what has now become a benchmark work. *The Two Cultures* pertains to the gulf "of mutual incomprehension" which Snow saw to exist between scientific and literary (meaning the humanities) ways of thought. Snow, 4. Snow's essay spurred much debate, garnering its share of defenders and critics alike, but more importantly, drawing lasting attention to the different kinds of academic thought and raising questions as to whether they could relate from some common ground.

[19] Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of the Modern Science, 1300-1800*, 2nd ed, (New York: Free Press,

nevertheless the response to this genuine intellectual development on the part of institutionalized Western religions like Roman Catholicism was at best cool. The debate between competing religious and scientific cosmologies continues in some form even today, as for example, in the disputes over the teaching of evolution and creation science in public schools in the United States.[20]

Although mainstream Christian churches in the last century acknowledged the legitimacy of the scientific revolution, the broadening scope of science treads into fields that organized religion traditionally considered its own jurisdiction, such as issues involving procreation, determining what it is to be human, and explaining the nature of death. Further, it seems the environmental question emerged as a secular development first, a product of scientific concern and investigation. So although environmental issues are also linked to questions of human existence and meaning, environmental ethics as we know it does not have an explicitly religious history. With scientific minds now pondering the varied mysteries of the universe, religion is left to reconsider its territory and relevance, especially towards issues it may have neglected in the past. Scholars have noted Christianity's rather "breathless" arrival, late on the scene of environmental ethics and needing to catch up to contemporary secular environmental movements.[21] Both science and religion address questions relevant to understanding our own lives and the

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1966), 7.

[20] See George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991).

[21] Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church* (Scoresby, Vic.: The Canterbury Press, 1990) 192, quoted in Denis Edwards, "The Integrity of Creation: Catholic Social Teaching for an Ecological Age," *Pacifica* 5 (1992) : 190. Lonergan uses a similar expression in *Insight*, pertaining to matters of reason and faith in Catholicism, 755.

world in which we live. However, in the contexts of social policy and the public good, religion, whose belief systems "bound together" communities of previous ages, cannot be said to have a monopoly on fulfilling this function in the pluralism of the contemporary Western world.

Don Cupitt notes that modern Christianity is making a shift in its prime focus towards social ethics, to defend individual human rights and to protect human dignity from potentially dehumanizing forces in the state and in technology.[22] Yet if Christianity tries to put more emphasis on making social ethics and the common good its business, it ventures forth into uncertain and turbulent waters. Ethicist Margaret Somerville claims that a society which commits itself to secularism and individualism has lost its commitment to the common good: an emphasis on tolerance, plurality, and individual freedom loses almost any sense of community good.[23] Somerville is concerned that this is the case in North America. This is particularly a problem for environmental ethics where the tension between individual freedom and perceived common good is particularly sharp. This tension is clearly manifest in present disputes across the country around over-fishing, logging old-growth forests, strip mining, and toxic waste disposal. In such matters there is often a polarity between private corporations or occupational unions and groups claiming to represent an environmental common good. One must question the efficacy of systems which keep discussion of the common good to a minimum. If, for example, liberalism's primary approach to resolving social questions is

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[22] Cupitt, 10

[23] Margaret Somerville, *The Ethical Canary: Science, Society and the Human Spirit* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2000).

an attitude of tolerance, its weakness would seem to lie in the inadequacy of such an approach; guidance merely through tolerance fails to consider the need of a higher order beyond the balancing of individual interests. Religious views see asking questions of ultimate meaning to be essential to sorting out issues of individual and common good.

Given the rapid pace of technological development, the globalizing economy, and the advance of pluralism, it is no surprise there has been a surge of public interest in ethical questions, especially on medical and environmental issues such as transgenic organ implantations, biomedical engineering, waste management, and the energy crisis. All these issues have wide- and long-ranging implications. Human beings as a species can make a significant impact on the environment and on each other at a much faster rate and with a much greater force than ever before. It is often easier to perfect a skill, hone a technology, or make a scientific breakthrough, than it is to reflect on the consequences. We can do many things, but should we do all of them? To be effective, ethics must keep pace with issues as they arise. For example, the growth of contemporary secularism and individualism raise questions about how to determine and organize around a common good, and if we should at all. In matters of the common good, do religious values offer a contribution? If so, is this contribution helpful? Are there any perspectives which could lead to specific development in religion-based (in this context, specifically Roman Catholic) environmental ethics?

6. Lonergan and the Crisis of Culture

The difficulties in establishing effective dialogue between secular and religious approaches to ethics are part of a larger situation which Lonergan calls a "crisis in culture." A Catholic priest and philosopher from Quebec, Bernard J.F. Lonergan (1904-1984) is perhaps best known for his theory of knowing and his method in theology called functional specialization. However, Lonergan's interests spanned from mathematics to the philosophy of history to the human sciences of sociology, politics, and economics.[24] As a contemporary thinker he was especially concerned with the dynamics of progress and decline in human society and particularly with the "crisis of culture" which he saw to hinder progress and exacerbate decline. To this we will turn shortly. He was also concerned with meeting the modern world's challenges to Catholic thought and practice. While conservative in temperament, Lonergan was open to genuine secular developments, especially in the empirical sciences and historical scholarship. In my view, Lonergan provides a particularly rich source for addressing the questions of this thesis.

Before proceeding further we must establish some of the foundations from which Lonergan's thought operates. Similar to psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs,[25] Lonergan works from the assumption that there is a hierarchy of values.[26] The

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[24] Grant D. Miller Francisco, "Lonergan, Bernard," *Dictionary of Modern Western Theology II, 1998-1999*; http://www.bu.edu/wwildman/WeirdWildWeb/co...mwt/dictionary/mwt_themes_840_lonergan.htm; accessed August 20, 2001.

[25] Maslow's hierarchy states that the physical, psychological, and emotional needs of human beings must be met in a certain order; the pyramid structure of his hierarchical model demonstrates that the most basic needs are found at the bottom of the pyramid and thus serve as a foundation upon which all other needs are

most basic values are *vital* values which include things like health, vitality, strength and physical grace of the individual. These are followed by *social* values, or the good of order. Social values determine how a community is organized in terms of economics, governance, technology, and law, among other systems. They ensure that basic needs are met. Basic needs like securing food and shelter, maintaining health, and making a living may be met in a variety of ways through different social organizations as the two recent, large-scale, and contrasting examples of capitalism and communism exemplify. Each is a system of meeting basic needs but the values embodied in each differ greatly. After social values follow *cultural* values, which deal in meaning. The meaning common to a community is expressed through and propagated by things like education, art, literature, music, and criticism. *Personal* values remind us that it is individuals who make up a community and each person has the capacity to make choices which impact upon the community; these values describe the morals and concrete decisions made by each private citizen. *Ultimate* or *religious* values are the core meanings which orient human living, guide how our character is developed, and evaluate the final worth of our actions. One need not be explicitly religious to be guided by ultimate values or consider questions of ultimate meaning; to be oriented to mystery and to possess the potential to ask existential questions are things to which Lonergan insists all humanity is predisposed.

Lonergan believed this to be the structure of value, ordered into a hierarchy. The hierarchy demonstrates reciprocal relationships between values: the higher values as

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met. See Frank G. Goble, *The Third Force: The Psychology of Abraham Maslow*, with a forward by Abraham Maslow (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1970).

[26] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 31-32.

found in the cultural, personal, and ultimate spheres cannot be addressed or explored until the lower values are first provided for or satisfied (e.g. one cannot adequately ponder life's mysteries if one is starving); in a top-down direction the higher values orient how we meet the lower ones (e.g. if one generally values equality of all persons then one will support making health care services available to all). In other words, fulfilling the "lower" values, those basic to physical survival, makes it possible to contemplate and expand upon the "higher" values, those which allow hearts, minds, and spirits to flourish. At the same time, the higher values orient the lower values. Furthermore, if people become preoccupied with one level of value over another, the imbalance can throw the hierarchy off; for example, a society too engrossed in the workings of its economy may not experience a flourishing of culture, while another society preoccupied with the minutiae of its theology may fail to see how the basic needs of its members may best be met. Lonergan sees a dialectical relationship existing between the higher values which orient and the lower values which are conditioning.

It is in this context of levels of value that Lonergan's notion of "crisis of culture" may be discussed. Our commitment to what we value and how we prioritize those values will orient our action, which is the stuff of ethics. Lonergan claims that the hierarchy of values as he lays it out is the normative state of human value. If we experience a crisis at any level of value, or especially if we operate within a disordered hierarchy, as Lonergan claims is the present case, our ethics will suffer, too.

Many thinkers, past and present, have meditated on the loss of common ground or common, ultimate, frames of reference that seems to be occurring in the West.[27] James Marsh writes:

> Heidegger complains that the twentieth century has witnessed a loss of the sense of being. The loss of a sense of being is, to a significant extent, a political problem. Subjectivity, being, and God are covered over by a social system that reduces human beings to objects, equates reality with the technocratic, commodified surface and turns God into an unverifiable myth.[28]

If this is the case, without a common ground and an adequate sense of purpose, how will we collectively make ethical decisions that affect us all? Although Marsh decides to address the problem from a political perspective, with some thought-provoking results,[29] Lonergan's view takes the root of this dilemma beyond the political. He traces the loss of a sense of being through all aspects of the social structure: politics, economics, law, technology, the family organization, churches and sects. Although he terms it a crisis of culture, it seems to be very much socially concerned. On this count, Lonergan offers this distinction between the social and the cultural: "The social is conceived of as a way of life, a way in which men live together in some orderly and therefore predictable

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[27] See Somerville, *The Ethical Canary*; also E. A. Morelli, "Women's Intuition: A Lonerganian Analysis," 78-79.

[28] James Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality: Intellectual, Moral and Religious Conversion as Radical Political Conversion," in *Ultimate Reality and Meaning: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding* 13, no. 3 (September 1990): 238.

[29] Marsh's article examines the socio-political implications of Lonergan's notion of conversion. His assertion that capitalism is inherently incompatible with Lonergan's notion of conversion is particularly compelling. The implications may be explored more fully in a discussion of free market environmentalism; see Terry L. Anderson and Donald Leal, *Free Market Environmentalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Palgrave Press, 2001). Anderson and Leal are proponents of free market environmentalism, serving to drastically contrast with Marsh's interpretation of the market and Lonergan's notion of conversion. Free market environmentalism encourages entrepreneurs to take control of the environment, turning a profit while supposedly protecting and regulating nature's resources. The authors' arguments are compelling, but critics such as Herman Daly argue that environmental ethics must encompass much more than simply

fashion."[30] The social sphere is essentially the mechanism for meeting needs. Culture, in terms of his scale of values, is built upon social organization:

> For men not only do things. They wish to understand their own doing. They wish to discover and to express the appropriateness, the meaning, the significance, the value, and the use of their way of life as a whole and in its parts. Such discovery and expression constitute the cultural and, quite evidently, culture stands to social order as soul to body, for any element of social order will be rejected the moment it is widely judged inappropriate, meaningless, irrelevant, useless, just not worthwhile.[31]

In other words, the social revolves around organizing ourselves to get things done. Ethics concerns itself with getting things done *properly* and thus serves as a bridge between the social sphere and the higher values embodied in culture and religion. This is a case in point of how lower values condition higher ones and how higher values orient lower ones. Social systems allow the possibility of higher culture to emerge. The culture that forms orients the particular ways that those social systems operate. Yet today, in Lonergan's estimation, the prevailing Western attitude denies the relevance of religious values to modern living in the public sphere.[32] In an environmental context, the politics, economics, technologies, laws, and other social systems that influence the environment no longer seem to be oriented by the full contingent of higher cultural, personal and religious/ultimate values on Lonergan's hierarchy of values. Neglecting to account for any of these higher values, in this case, religious values in the context of environmental

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managing the environment. See Herman Daly, "Free Market Environmentalism: Turning a Good Servant into a Bad Master," *Critical Review* 6, no 2-3 (1993) : 171-183.

[30] Bernard Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," in *A Second Collection*, ed. William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 102.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 101-116.

ethics, means that an essential part of the equation is missing. In order for the hierarchy of values to be normative, which Lonergan claims it is, all parts must be included.

In speaking of the crisis of culture (although one must keep in mind that the "crisis" affects more than just culture), Lonergan refers to changes in meaning.[33] The whole of human life is steeped in meaning. Religious, personal, cultural, social, and vital values are shaped by our systems of meaning; what defines a community is that it shares a sense of meaning:

> Community is a matter of a common field of experience, a common mode of understanding, a common measure of judgment, and a common consent. Such community is the possibility, the source, the ground, of common meaning; and it is this common meaning that is the form and act that finds expression in family and polity, in the legal and economic system, in customary morals and educational arrangements, in language and literature, art and religion, philosophy, science, and the writing of history.[34]

Yet with the diversity of philosophies and associated lifestyles in our modern culture, the common reservoir of meaning risks being fragmented or being lost altogether. Although we may be content to identify ourselves with smaller groups in terms of things like ethnicity, religion, and geography, it remains that we are members of the public sphere, especially in terms of politics, economics, health care, education, and the environment. We therefore cannot abandon the requirements for determining public policies. Public decision-making is thus still vital and demands consensus on some form of common ground of meaning and value. Lonergan notes further that if meaning itself is an important part of human living, the reflection on meaning and the control of meaning are

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[33] Bernard Lonergan, "Dimensions of Meaning," in *Collection,* Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 4, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 235.

still more important, "[f]or if social and cultural changes are, at root, changes in the meaning that are grasped and accepted, changes in the control of meaning mark off the great epochs in human history."[35] It is this control of meaning to which we now turn.

According to Lonergan, the development of humanity has passed through several stages of consciousness and degrees of self-reflection.[36] These will be examined in more detail below. The first stage was the development of practical common sense. The second stage was the development of theory. This flows into our present state, a rather more muddied, intermediate state of self-awareness accompanied by uncertainty and what some might call existential angst. Lonergan says there is a third stage yet to be reached but which offers great potential for a differentiated consciousness and authentic living. What marks off one era or stage from another is change in the control of meaning.[37] Meaning is controlled by such things as alphabets, grammar, philosophy, logic, narrative, lexicon, and symbols. When these change, so too does the degree of differentiation of the collective consciousness of a culture. The primitive consciousness of the first human communities focused on collections of common sense knowledge, with little indication of philosophical reflection. Religion bound human beings to the divine and to the earth. With the advance of common sense innovation, there were great developments in technical, economic, domestic, and political structures, but history and

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[34] Ibid., 234.
[35] Ibid., 235.
[36] Bernard Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985). Lonergan cites three stages, or plateaus, of history. See also Michael Shute, *The Origins of Lonergan's Notion of the Dialectic of History: A Study of Lonergan's Early Writings on History* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1993).
[37] Lonergan, "Dimensions of Meaning," 235.

human nature were understood to be guided by fate, destiny, or divine providence.[38] The beginning of the next epoch arose into what is called a classical consciousness, exemplified by Greek thought with its focus on theory, self-knowledge, and unchanging universals like Plato's eternal good. The workings of the mind fascinated Greek philosophers, who developed methods of systematic thinking first in philosophy and later in science. The controls on meaning in the classical context shifted away from the primitive immediacy of common sense to eternal ideals.[39] Religion still played an important part as mediator between humanity and the divine, but more emphasis was placed on differentiating theory from practice in all areas of life. With the emergence of the scientific method, the Enlightenment, and increasing skepticism about the validity and relevance of religion, Western humanity arrived at what Lonergan calls the present-day "troubled consciousness."[40] The deductive techniques and eternal truths of classical consciousness began to give way to that which was empirical, concrete, and historical.[41] This new awareness (borrowing an image from the physicist Eddington) on the one hand acknowledges the reality of a table made of solid, heavy, brown wood yet on the other hand also can recognize the table as mostly empty space and atoms.[42] Thus the contributions of science have done much to explain the world but also to present us with a more complex understanding, a dual reality which leaves us trying to reconcile seemingly contradictory notions. These changes in meaning (for example, something as

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[38] Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 178; and Shute, *Dialectic of History*, 2.
[39] Shute, *Dialectic of History*, 2-3.
[40] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 84.
[41] Shute, *Dialectic of History*, 5.
[42] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 84.

deceptively simple as "What is a table?") prompted Lonergan to characterize his, and now our, modern times in terms of rapid change and a preoccupation with the self:

> ...modern culture transforms man's control over nature and in consequence involves a reordering of society. The new scene is one of technology, automation, built-in obsolescence, a population explosion, increasing longevity, urbanism, mobility, detached and functional relations between persons, universal, prolonged, and continuing education, increasing leisure and travel, instantaneous information, and perpetually available entertainment. In this ever changing scene God, when not totally absent, appears an intruder. To mention him, if not meaningless, seems to be irrelevant.[43]

It is this irrelevance of the divine, transcendent mystery, embodied for Lonergan in the Christian God but applicable to any human sense of ultimate meaning, which troubled him. Despite advances and achievements attributed to modern thinking, Lonergan was concerned that his era may have lost sight of the pinnacle in the hierarchy of values, that which is provided by an orientation to ultimate meaning. Furthermore, he did not believe that questions of ultimate meaning could be met completely at a personal, individual level but rather must be shared with a community: the quest for ultimate meaning must be supported by a community's willingness and openness to explore those questions and to live collectively by the answers. Just as contemporary Western society generally lives by a confidence in and reliance on collaborative scientific investigation, in matters of everything from nutrition to medicine to engineering to communications, so Lonergan believed there was a place for religious values in guiding how we organize ourselves around ultimate, and thus common, goods.

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[43] Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," 114.

In this millennia-long progression of consciousness from primitive to classical to modern (or "troubled"), Lonergan says there is a further, third stage yet to be grasped collectively, that of an adequately differentiated consciousness. It involves a shift to interiority, a self-awareness which might resolve issues of "troubled consciousness." This is a self-awareness which acknowledges the normative and transcendental aspects of human knowing (to be explored in the next chapter), which is able to shift appropriately between mental processes and distinct contexts of meaning, which is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. In other words, Lonergan believes we have not yet reached our full potential as beings who know and choose. In all stages of humanity's development there is a permanent tension characterized by the push and pull between historicity and human nature. Each stage of consciousness which Lonergan identified found its own way of dealing with this tension. Upheavals in thought and changes in collective meaning marked off the epochs. Lonergan parallels this collective shift of consciousness with the individual shift in consciousness rooted in his cognitional theory. As individuals are meant to develop higher levels of consciousness through self-appropriation, so too does he believe we should aim for a higher state of collective consciousness. The future is always uncertain, but knowing where we have come from and how we arrived will help guide us more intelligently and responsibly to where we should go and how we should get there.

If collective meaning defines a culture and, if the shifts in the control of that meaning define epochs of human history, it is the notion of collective responsibility, which will be taken up in the last chapter of this thesis, that Lonergan intends to develop

when addressing the crisis of culture. As Lonergan argued, the crisis of culture we find ourselves in, and the potential for religion to regain a social role, are rooted in the push-and-pull relationship of the two components which make up concrete human reality: "on the one hand, a constant, human nature; on the other hand, a variable, human history. Nature is given man at birth. Historicity is what man makes of man."[44] It is the present-day secular philosophies of history which strike Lonergan as inadequate for handling this crisis of culture and moving us beyond a fragmented, troubled consciousness into a fuller and more authentic state of being. He saw this troubled consciousness demonstrated in a wide-spread liberalism of North America: a view which extols progress as a virtue, but in terms of a seemingly unending progress which embraces rapid technological development, booming expansion of capitalist economies, and the elevation of the rights and interests of the individual over the common good.[45] Scholars have noted that similarly, modern communist and socialist philosophies, in extolling their own versions of virtue, have had their pitfalls. In sum, as Shute notes: "Loose from its spiritual moorings western culture finds itself lacking in a sense of direction other than that provided by the competing interests of the powerful."[46] This suggests that there is an imbalance in the hierarchy of values, that being the preoccupation with and domination of social (i.e. political and economic) power to the neglect of higher cultural and ultimate values. Such an imbalance is seen to further skew ethical priorities.

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[44] Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 170. In this discussion, Lonergan fuses ancient Greek thought (natural right) with the 19th century idea of historicity. Natural right was the Greek answer to what made humans different from animals, that being a "permanent and binding force" such that "[u]nderneath the manifold of human lifestyles, there existed a component or factor that possessed the claims to universality and permanence of nature itself." 172.
[45] Shute, *Dialectic of History*, 5-6.

Just as it did not seem possible to build a foundation of proper action solely upon economic or political principles, neither was Lonergan convinced that a culture steeped in the philosophies of science could be sufficient for exploring issues of ultimate meaning that would help guide discussion in ethics. Lonergan describes the scientific method: "it begins from data, it discerns intelligible unities and relationships within data, and it is subject to the check of verification, to the correction and revision to be effected by confrontation with further relevant data."[47] Having said this, Lonergan cautions:

> Now such procedures cannot lead one beyond this world. The divine is not a datum to be observed by sense or to be uncovered by introspection. Nor will any intelligible unity or relationship verifiable within such data lead us totally beyond such data to God. Precisely because modern science is specialized knowledge of man and of nature, it cannot include knowledge of God. God is neither man nor nature.[48]

Again, God here is the Christian embodiment of transcendent mystery. Lonergan's concerns are twofold: that either we are using the wrong tools to probe into this mystery (e.g. to think that science can answer all the questions we have and advise us on proper courses of action) or that we are no longer attuned to the mystery at all (e.g. to be too caught up in the mechanics of making a living, of production and consumption).

Thus, Lonergan notes what he calls the absence of God in modern culture. This applies increasingly to modern religion as much as anything else: rather than offering counter-cultural alternatives and transcending the clamour of cultural confusion, the more

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[46] Ibid., 7.
[47] Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," 107.
[48] Ibid.

religion aligns itself with societal forces which tend to neglect the questions of ultimate meaning, the more it risks making itself irrelevant.[49]

7. Christian Thought in a Contemporary World

Christian thought has struggled to meet the challenges of broadening secularism, but Lonergan argues that it stumbles in its shortcomings insofar as it operates from the precepts of classical consciousness;[50] thus, Catholicism has not escaped unscathed from the issue of the troubled consciousness. Concerned with what he considered antiquated notions and a questionable contemporary relevance of the religion, Lonergan asserted the need for the Church to advance without sacrificing its core beliefs: only by bringing the Christian tradition up to speed with contemporary consciousness without itself falling victim to fleeting trends could there be hope of countering the cultural crisis from a Christian stance.

For theology to mediate effectively between religion and culture it must understand the past, move with the times, and have a vision for the future. As a priest and philosopher critical of the weaknesses of his own discipline of theology, Lonergan was distressed at theology's retreat from the pressing ethical issues which modern science, philosophy, and law have since co-opted. Faced with what appeared to be the absence of God in modern culture, Lonergan hoped that theology would remain relevant

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[49] See McFague 35. McFague is a proponent of religion offering countercultural alternatives. She notes, however, that it is ironic that the very forces such as politics, economics, and science which displaced the social influence of religion and gave birth to secularism now influence how religion conducts itself; she suggests that secularism subtly dictates religion, in manners such as extolling the virtues of capitalism. At the same time, the other side of the coin is the potential stagnation of religion if it does not keep pace with the times, which will be addressed later in this chapter.

and fill that void: "if increasing specialization prevents modern science from speaking of God, one would expect it to enable modern theology to speak of God all the more fully and effectively. However, while I hope and labor that this will be so, I have to grant that it is not yet achieved. Contemporary theology and especially contemporary Catholic theology are in a feverish ferment."[51] He claimed that this stagnation is due not just to old theology being obsolete or to there being only a scattering of new theology from which to reap; what is missing is an entirely new way to integrate the multiplicity of perspectives, the changing times, and the new dilemmas posed by scientific and technological "progress".[52] The theology leading up to Lonergan's day concerned itself mostly with dogma and doctrine, to the detriment of those looking for religion's guidance in important everyday matters. Lonergan believed that theology should embrace new developments in human affairs rather than retreat from them.[53] Theology, in Lonergan's own words, "mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix."[54] For theology to turn its back on culture and to no longer be a mediator between humans and the ultimate questions they ask means that theology would renounce any claim to ethics, leaving the door open to ethics based solely on things like political or economic principles, values which are not oriented to questions of ultimate meaning. He further claimed that contemporary Catholic theology can no longer afford to be narrow-

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[50] Shute, *Dialectic of History*, 7.
[51] Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," 108.
[52] "Catholic theology at present is at a critical juncture. If I may express a personal view, I should say that the contemporary task of assimilating the fruits both of religious studies and of the new philosophies, of handling the problems of demythologization and of the possibility of objective religious statement, imposes on theology the task of recasting its notion of theological method in the most thoroughgoing and profound fashion." Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," 111.

minded and exclusive; it must "reach not only Christians but also non-Christians and atheists. It has to learn to draw not only on the modern philosophies but also on the relatively new sciences of religion, psychology, sociology, and to the new techniques of the communication arts."[55] The trick is to balance modern developments with staying true to Christian principles; to walk in step but not become misled by false promises. This is why Lonergan adopted the task of developing a scientific, empirical understanding of the historical process which accounted for both human nature and historicity and at the same time affirmed the central truths of Christianity.[56] He also sought to formulate his cognitional theory into a generalized empirical method which could be applied across disciplines. Far from being opposed to the principles and methods of science, Lonergan looked for ways scientific and religious thought could complement each other and mutually contribute to contemporary issues. He was opposed to an overuse or misappropriation of scientific mindsets which presumed to answer questions of ultimate meaning while overlooking religious values. He was similarly opposed to narrow religious viewpoints which would not advert to scientific authority where appropriate. If contemporary Christianity is still struggling to resolve its classical bent, it must do so with open eyes:

> Classical culture cannot be jettisoned without being replaced; and what replaces it cannot but run counter to classical expectations. There is bound to be formed a solid right that is determined to live in a world that no longer exists. There is bound to be formed a scattered left, captivated

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[53] Laurent Leduc, "Theology and Ecology: A Lonerganian Approach," *Religious Studies and Theology* 13-14, no. 1 (April 1995) : 70.
[54] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, xi.
[55] Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," in *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, ed. Walter E. Conn (New York: Alba House, 1978) 10.
[56] Shute, *Dialectic of History*, 7.

> by now this, now that new development, exploring now this and now that new possibility. But what will count is a perhaps not numerous center, big enough to be at home in both the old and the new, painstaking enough to work out one by one the transitions to be made, strong enough to refuse half measures and insist on complete solutions even though it has to wait.[57]

Thus, Lonergan strove to sort out the relationship between the mutual contributions of science and religion, and to balance the modern with the traditional.

Where, then, do religious values fit in today's society? According to Lonergan, religious or ultimate concerns crown what he sees to be the normative, hierarchical structure of values. Yet by the same token, if religion is still very much a part of people's private lives, it nevertheless seems that secular replacements for religion guide most ethical discussion in the public sphere. Neglecting either to ask questions of ultimate concern or else removing them from a religious context is really a dilution of the proper order of values and thus an inauthentic response to the problems of the world. What common framework is there for a dialogue between secular ethics and religious ethics? Those like Lonergan believe there is still a place for religious values in the contemporary debate concerning environmental ethics, bioethics, international development, or other issues of social policy. In terms of environmental ethics, although Christianity by turns has been blamed by scholars like Lynn White, Jr. for a significant contribution to environmental degradation and for arriving late on the scene in expressing its concern, there are those who believe the Church has the resources to offer potential solutions. Discovering what religion has to offer in this respect may highlight what secular ethics

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[57] Lonergan, "Dimensions of Meaning," 245.

has in common with religious ethics. Secular environmental ethics are already well established, with the environmental movement owing a large part to the advances in scientific investigation and empirical method. Lonergan will suggest that a generalized empirical method also is at work in matters of self-awareness and the asking of questions of ultimate meaning. So while environmental concern seems to be the domain first of science, the relevance of religion partially lies in the roots it shares with science, as Lonergan explains in his account of cognitional theory. Its relevance also lies in its orientation to questions of ultimate meaning, which some scholars suggest is essential to adequately addressing issues of environmental concern.[58] The so-called "troubled consciousness" which Lonergan sees to exist in the contemporary Western world seems to be caused by a disordered hierarchy of values and a growing uncertainty about what, if anything, of the human condition is normative or universal. Without norms to anchor our inquiries, how can we really know anything? Lonergan will assert that norms do indeed exist. How can we locate and communicate the relevant social role of religion? In this thesis I will argue that Lonergan's work in religious ethics–his cognitional theory, understanding of the human good, and notion of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion–offers a relevant and viable structure for analyzing ethical issues and for setting up a common framework for dialogue between secular and religious ethical viewpoints, pertaining specifically to environmental ethics.

As mentioned in the introduction, ecology literally means "house knowledge." For Lonergan, an understanding of the structure of knowledge is the key. Lonergan's

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[58] See notes 6 and 7.

work on cognitional theory will serve as a springboard into the often choppy waters of ethics. On knowing, Lonergan had this to say:

> To discover the self-transcendence proper to the human process of coming to know is to break often long-ingrained habits of thought and speech. It is to acquire the mastery in one's own house that is to be had only when one knows precisely what one is doing when one is knowing.[59]

It is this breaking of habits which will be introduced and explored in the following chapters as Lonergan's notion of conversion. It is his notion of knowing which will introduce the concept of self-transcendence and its relevance to ethical discussion. And it is acquiring mastery in one's own house through conversion and self-transcendence which will guide the discussion of religion's role in ecological ethics.

[59] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 239-240.

Chapter Two: The Fundamentals of Lonergan's Account of Ethics

This chapter offers a more in-depth look at the foundation of Lonergan's thought, namely his theory of cognition. Once we have introduced the theory, method, and relevance behind Lonergan's work, we will proceed towards a discussion of his notion of conversion. Lonergan identified three types of conversion: intellectual, moral, and religious. This chapter will introduce and examine the notions of intellectual and moral conversion in order to set up a discussion of religious conversion in the following chapter.

1. Ethics and Lonergan's Cognitional Theory

Ethics is about proper action. The word "proper" indicates that there exists a standard by which we can judge our actions. This normative notion of ethics, however, is put to the test in pluralist cultures. Western, and particularly North American, culture is one such example of a society which struggles with plurality in ethical issues. In light of this, how will we manage issues of the common good with respect to environmental ethics? If we share the same political and economic systems, are the values embodied in these social systems adequate for determining our official policies and personal attitudes towards the environment? Is there something more that needs to be considered? Do we have anything else in common by which to make decisions for the public good? Ethically speaking, how will we know when we are speaking the same language, using

the same meanings, making the same assumptions, and not only valuing the same things but valuing the proper things, or if we ought to abide by the same things at all?

Bernard Lonergan was among those determined to stake claim to the possibility of common ground in the study of ethics. One of his lifelong preoccupations was exploring the relationship between human nature and history. In his view, on the one hand, human nature is a constant. On the other hand, history is a variable. While all cultures have a history, each has their own. A collection of cultures such as comprises North American society is united by certain shared values, such as those embodied in democratic politics and capitalistic economics, yet is not sufficiently unified for public decision-making to come easy. With this in mind, Lonergan undertook a search for the invariant components of ethics. He seemed to find invariant components in his account of human cognition and deliberation. He invited all to discover and verify his claim through his method of self-appropriation. Lonergan regarded the drive towards self-understanding as fundamental to good decision-making, especially if we are to understand the nature of collective responsibility. In Lonergan's view, a central component in the issue of collective responsibility involves sorting out the relationship between ethical theory and moral practice. Lonergan's contribution to the study of ethics is therefore primarily in the area of metaethics.[1]

While ethics is about the existential elements of deliberation, Lonergan maintains that an account of human knowing is basic to understanding deliberation. It may be

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[1] Metaethics is defined as the study of how practical ethics and theories relate to each other. See Robert C. Solomon, *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics Through Classical Sources*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1992), 5.

argued that indeed any branch of systematic philosophy must have existential underpinnings, that is, it must rest on some theory of cognition and being. To explain what it is to know, what conscious activities occur in the self as a knower, is perhaps the most basic foundation for any philosophy. But how do we know knowing? Lonergan developed a method or practice for extricating and examining the elements of knowing, which he calls self-appropriation.[2] According to Lonergan, we all know in the same way. However, we are not all aware of the process or the structure of how we know. Lonergan not only offers a philosophy or theory of knowledge but also a method through which his audience may verify his claims. It is not good enough for people simply to be told about how they know; they must be active explorers on the journey in order to fully appreciate and appropriate the process of knowing. Lonergan is thus notable in his attempt to make his philosophy his method and vice versa. By claiming that humanity shares in the structure of knowing, and that this is verifiable through a particular method, Lonergan suggests that there are further characteristics we share that might facilitate identifying common ground for ethical discussion.

Yet before we even get to the universality of knowing, there is a prior condition that is also universal in human experience: we all wonder. Wonder is an orientation to

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[2] Lonergan's first extensive treatment of the structure of knowing is found in his book, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. It has been said that *Insight* should be used no so much as a philosophical treatise than as an "aid to the personal appropriation and objectification of one's rational self-consciousness." At the same time, while it may be most useful as a type of intellectual do-it-yourself guide, it still weighs in significantly on the philosophical scale, addressing the technical questions of cognitional analysis, epistemology, and metaphysics. See Frank E. Budenholzer, "Science and Religion: Seeking a Common Horizon," 356. See also Thomas J. McPartland, "Historicity and Philosophy: The Existential Dimension" in *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*, S.J., ed. Timothy P. Fallon, S.J. and Philip Boo Riley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 109. Leduc summarizes the goals of *Insight* thus: "to understand the human process of understanding, to examine the philosophical implications

knowing; it is the unrestricted desire to know. It crosses all stages of life, all cultures, and all eras of human civilization. The human story has always been one of wonder and as such is enshrined in everything we do: from the unworded infant fascination with the world to the existential questions of a philosopher deep in thought; from the most mundane questions of what to have for breakfast to the meditation on the puzzles of quantum mechanics, the relevancy of religious narratives, or the achievement of world peace. Wonder leads us to formulate questions; questions allow us to pursue knowledge; and knowledge enables us to act, for better or for worse. Among the things we wonder about is what to do and how to do it. These are the questions of ethics. Thus, an explicit account of human knowing would better prepare us for deliberation and action and improve the probability of producing better results, both for individuals and for the common good.

According to Lonergan there is an invariant structure to the process of knowing. Despite humanity's cultural and historical differences and the varying degrees of realized potential in each of us, we are all equipped to know in the same way.[3] Knowing is a matter of correctly understanding experience. This simple definition contains much that needs to be unpacked before its full implications can be appreciated. Correctly understanding experience is comprised of a trio of operations, identified by Lonergan as experiencing, understanding, and judging. This is only a part of the story, however. As will be explained in greater detail below, experiencing, understanding, and judging are

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of achieving an understanding of understanding, and to fight against what he [Lonergan] calls 'the flight from understanding'." Leduc, "Theology and Ecology: A Lonerganian Approach," 69.

the operations which result in knowledge of fact or truth. They are the stuff of theoretical reasoning, of understanding what something is and of figuring out the relation of one thing to another; its end is only to know what a situation is. Practical reasoning is the stuff of ethics, of wondering what to do about a situation and acting upon it. It has the same structure as theoretical reasoning in its reliance on experience, understanding, and judgment, but requires the extra component of deliberation. The role of deliberation will be explored further on in this chapter, where we will discuss knowledge of value and the structure of decision-making. For now we return to the basic structure of knowing comprised of correctly understanding experience.

All of us are born into a world of immediacy: of unmediated sensation and of a time known only as the present. Part of the maturation process is the mediation of this sensory bombardment through words, language, symbols, meaning, a sense of past and future, and an appreciation of the abstract, the ideal, the normative, and the fantastic.[4] To be aware of this process of increasingly differentiated consciousness within the self is a first step in what Lonergan calls self-appropriation. It is through this process of development that we become aware of ourselves and of how we are distinct from the world. Though this may be a largely natural process of growing from a child to an adult,

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[3] However, as shall be discussed further on, the innate pattern of human knowing "does not compel us to follow its dictates." See J.W. Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," *Theology* 86 (September 1983) : 348. This is also addressed later in this chapter in the discussion on biases and decline.

[4] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 28; Lonergan also applies this evolution from immediacy to mediacy to the development of cultures. "Lower" cultures, although experiencing a world mediated by meaning, lack control over meaning and are steeped in the influence of magic and myth. "Higher" cultures develop controls on meaning such as grammar, alphabets, logic, and philosophy. He also makes a distinction within higher culture between classical and modern higher culture; classical culture "thinks of the control as a universal fixed for all time" while modern culture "thinks of the controls as themselves involved in an ongoing process." *Method in Theology*, 28-29. From this discussion of immediacy versus mediacy in culture, Lonergan proceeds to focus discussion from the scale of culture to the scale of the individual.

the degree of self-knowledge will vary, through circumstance or by choice.[5] Compounding the development of self-knowledge is the component of belief: no one person can know everything and so an account of knowing must accommodate the extra element of belief, which will be discussed later on in the chapter. [6]

One appropriates the operations of one's intentional consciousness. Operations, things as basic as the five senses, are intentional in that they have objects. Sight intends what is seen, hearing intends what is heard, and so on. For operations to occur they must have an operator or a subject. Although the operations occur spontaneously, the point of self-appropriation is to be aware of the conscious component of operation, and to be aware of ourselves as operators or subjects. As noted above, in theoretical reasoning there are three levels of intentional consciousness: experience, understanding, and judgment. Practical reasoning involves four levels: experience, understanding, judgment, and deliberation. Acts on each level are conditioned by their predecessor and collectively these acts make up a normative pattern of operations which, when carried out properly, result in "authentic" knowing. Being skilled in any pattern of operations, knowing what they are and beginning to understand how they relate, whether it be the operations involved in changing a tire, baking a cake, or being aware of the process of knowing, enables the subject to master the pattern and to build upon it.[7]

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[5] Ibid., 29.

[6] "The world mediated by meaning is a world known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community. Knowing, accordingly, is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing." Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," 16.

[7] On how skill begets mastery, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 27-28. Lonergan was inspired by the work of Piaget who studied the patterns of child development.

It is on the first and most basic level of experience that we are open to data of two kinds: of sense (that which is brought from the external world by the senses) and of consciousness (the internal acts of the senses, the imagination, feelings evoked by the data, and the mental operations of questioning, understanding, reasoning, deliberating and choosing which are active in handling the data). However, raw experience in itself has no meaning; it is an unmediated flow of data. Once we shift from the immediacy of an infant to the world of meaning, the flow of data is mediated. This is the result of the intervention or mediation by the process of knowing upon the flow of data. Oriented by native wonder, we have questions about the data, such as "what is it?" which lead to the next level of consciousness, understanding. In attempting to understand experience, we operate empirically, asking questions, coming up with answers, verifying our solutions.[8] As Lonergan notes, while data provoke inquiry, "what is sought by inquiry is never just another datum but the idea or form, the intelligible unity or relatedness, that organizes data into intelligible wholes."[9] Through this inquisitive process we arrive at a possible answer; it is then that we arrive at the third level of consciousness, judgment. In judging we reflect on the answer or solution we have hit upon; this reflection takes the basic form of wondering "is it so?" or "is this a fact?" If we judge that it is *not* so, then we must go back to asking more questions, re-examining the data to see if we have taken everything relevant to the question under consideration. Once we are able to judge that it *is* so, this is the end of the process of knowing the facts.

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[8] This parallels the structure of scientific method with its hypothesis, experimentation, and verification. Lonergan explores this common ground between religion and science in his article, "Isomorphism of Thomist and Scientific Thought," in *Collection*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 4, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 133-141.

However, having gained knowledge of the situation, the practical side of ethics prompts, "What now?" One may know the facts, but what is one to do with them? In ethics, wonder becomes concern and the component of action demands that we move to a fourth level of intentional consciousness called deliberation. It is here that we ask what might we do or what should we do with the knowledge we have gained. A more detailed discussion of deliberation will follow shortly.

Recurrent through the process of knowing are the acts of direct and reflective insight. Exposed to data and oriented by wonder to ask questions about the data, we come upon possible answers to make sense of the data; it is direct insight which offers answers to the question, "What is it?" Direct insight leads to images, definitions, or other formulations of possible answers. It stands to be verified in the further question, "Is it so?" Direct insights are not always correct, but they are necessary to understanding. Similarly, reflective insights are necessary at the level of judgment. Reflective insight compares the formulation against the data to determine if there is a fit. The act of judgment is the affirmation or denial of the fit. Reflective insight attempts to answer, "Is it so?" and allows the judgment of fact to affirm or deny whether something is so. Thus in Lonergan's model the structure of theoretical reasoning follows seven distinct acts over three levels:

1. exposure to data of sense and/or consciousness (at the level of experience)
2. asking of the data: "What is it?"
3. coming up with direct insights
4. formulating thought into words, images, ideas (at the level of understanding)
5. asking of the formulation, "Is it so?"
6. engaging in reflective insight

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[9] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 10

7. which grounds judgment of fact (at the level of judging)

The process is illustrated in the following diagram:

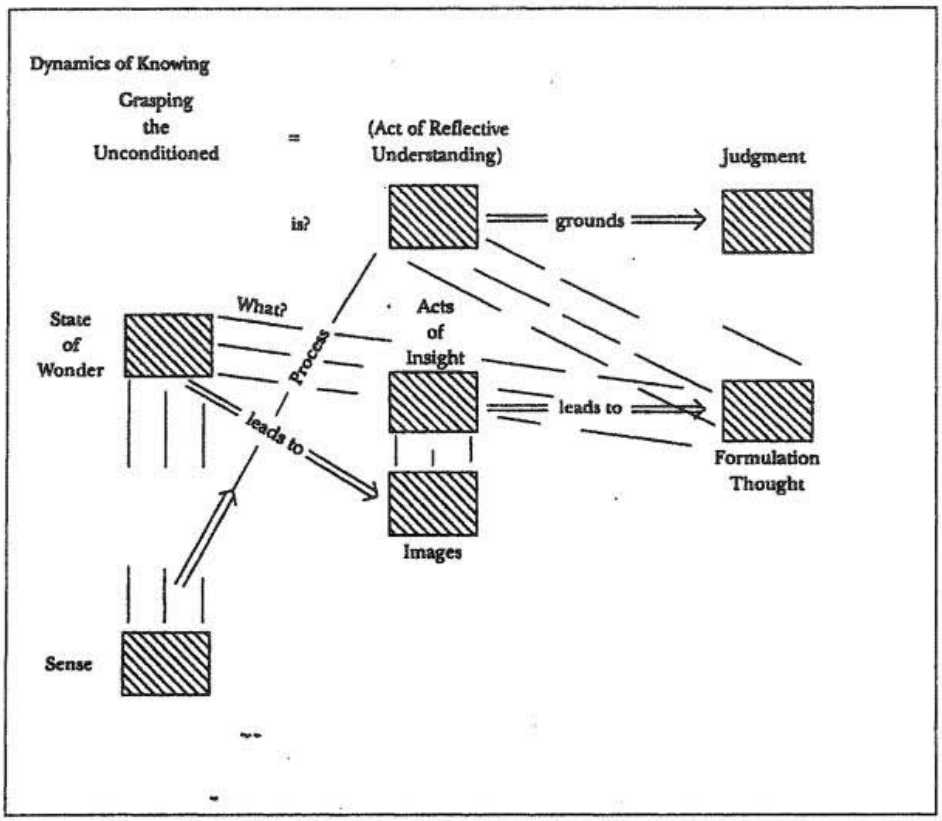

Figure 2.1: According to Lonergan, the structure of knowing consists of seven distinct acts on three levels of consciousness. From *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 18*, ed. Philip McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), Appendix A, 323.

This threefold structure of knowing–of experience, understanding, and judgment–serves as the basis for what Lonergan calls "transcendental method." This refers to the pattern of operations which characterize the act of knowing yet which are not confined to

any particular area of knowledge.[10] The cognitional structure outlined above underlies any instance of "authentic knowing."

As a guide to what he calls "authentic" knowing, Lonergan identifies not only a structure to the process but norms for each level. In any inquiry, when presented with data at the level of experience, we must be attentive, or else we miss relevant data. When understanding, we must be intelligent in choosing the questions to ask. When judging, we must be reasonable in weighing evidence and drawing conclusions. When deliberating, we must be responsible in the values we affirm and in the courses of action we decide upon, knowing that we are accountable for the choices we make. These four directives are what Lonergan calls transcendental precepts.

2. Transcendence

Why is this method understood as transcendent? When knowing is successful it transcends, in the sense that the knower has gone beyond oneself and can understand the world not just as it appears to the knower but also in terms of how things are of themselves, independent of the knower. Furthermore, oriented by wonder, or the unrestricted desire to know, this method is described as an "*eros* of the mind... which drives us ever onward toward transcendent knowledge."[11] Yet the transcendental method is more than just a pre-existing principle which ensures the cognitional cogs are in proper working order; "it is a principle that leads us from ignorance to knowledge. It is the

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[10] Budenholzer, "Science and Religion: Seeking a Common Horizon," 356.
[11] Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," 346; Being able to wonder without limits thus points to issues of ultimate meaning, issues that traditionally have been the domain of religion.

intention of being."[12] Knowledge makes a difference: it makes us fuller and better. Lonergan believed knowing to be both an existential and a transcendental process: to know is to be and this brings us back to the existential foundations necessary for any philosophy. But to know is also to transcend oneself: to go beyond the level of sensory experience in asking questions about it; to go beyond merely asking questions by answering them; to go beyond mere answering of questions to act upon a decision made.

Deliberation adds an effective component to the process of knowing. Deliberation demands that a choice be made. In ethics, self-transcendence is even more evident, especially when weighing the common good against individual interests: here, in the deciphering of not just facts but of personal values or morals, the dimension of feeling is added. Feelings inform a great deal about values and this too is an existential discovery: "With that discovery [that choosing between courses of action makes one an authentic or an unauthentic human being; that you can either act consistently with what you know or in contradiction to it], there emerges in consciousness the significance of personal value and the meaning of personal responsibility."[13] Values are apprehended in feelings. One makes a judgment of value after regarding the data which is presented in feeling. For Lonergan, adding the religious component of love for the divine or transcendent mystery takes the process even further, as shall be discussed in the next chapter.

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[12] Michael Rende, *Lonergan on Conversion: The Development of a Notion* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 184.
[13] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 38.

With transcendental method, it is never enough just to *do* it; we must be *aware* of the process. There are what Lonergan terms "neglected subjects" who do not know themselves, or worse, "truncated subjects" who not only do not know themselves but also do not know there is anything to know. In this case,

> ...to them the human mind is just a black box. The input is clear enough. The output is clear enough. But the inner working is a mystery... when one moves beyond the limits of commonsense competence, when one wishes to have an opinion of one's own on larger issues, then one had best know just what one is doing. Otherwise one too easily will be duped and too readily exploited.[14]

According to this, it is in our own best interests not only to be informed as to what is happening around us, but also to be just as well informed as to what is happening inside us. To neglect the self as subject is to neglect the data which is relevant to moral deliberation and which would also verify Lonergan's cognitional theory. Just as empirical science depends upon verification in the data of experience, the transcendental method is verified in the data of consciousness, without which there could be no knowledge at all.

3. An Introduction to Bias

Lonergan's account of cognitional processes throws new light on our estimation of what knowing is and on other philosophical efforts to account for the process of knowing. By the same token, knowledge of the cognitional process also opens up the possibility of knowledge of its deformation. Lonergan investigates this in his account of

bias. He identifies four types: blindspots, individual bias (egoism), group bias, and a type of temporal or general bias where long term consequences are overlooked for short term gain. A detailed discussion of bias and the decline which results from it will follow in the next chapter. In this context it is enough to state Lonergan's assertion that for too long has the myth of knowing prevailed, a myth which says that: "knowing is looking, objectivity is what can be seen, and reality is what's there."[15] Those who fall into the trap of this myth are identified by Lonergan as one of several types. The naive realist thinks knowing is looking; one knows something just by taking a look at it. The empiricist trusts only his or her senses: objectivity is equated only with sensory experience, while understanding and judgment are considered subjective activities and therefore not reliable. The idealist thinks knowing means having a concept of the real as ideal. It is only what Lonergan calls the critical realist who can overcome these pitfalls to realize that knowing is a self-transcending process, a process which is arduous and demanding, but rewards the knower with a correct pattern of judgments.[16] The critical realist understands that knowledge is a complex, dynamic process involving acts of experiencing, understanding, and judging. Knowledge is not obtained in just one operation, such as seeing. Objectivity for the critical realist is not separate from

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[14] Cited from a lecture entitled "Self-Transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious" which Lonergan delivered at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, October 10, 1974; quoted in Philip McShane, *Economics for Everyone: Das Jus Kapital* (Halifax: Axial Press Inc., 1998), 157.

[15] Bernard Lonergan, "Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on *Insight*," in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 5*, 2nd ed. (revised, augmented), ed. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 185.

[16] See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 238. See also Budenholzer, "Science and Religion: Seeking a Common Horizon," 359 and James B. Sauer, *A Commentary on Lonergan's Method in Theology*, ed. Peter L. Monette and Christine Jamieson (Ottawa: The Lonergan Website, www.lonergan.on.ca, 2001), 242. Marsh takes a somewhat more harsh position in his pronouncement that naive realists, empiricists, and

subjectivity.[17] As a critical realist, one then rejects all incarnations of the myth, such as objectivism, positivism, scientism, pragmatism, materialism, behaviorism, and all other such "isms." In Lonerganian thought these tend to become confining ideologies which deny the asking of certain relevant questions or whole classes of questions.[18]

4. Knowing as Common Ground

Why begin with knowing? Knowing is basic to all human inquiry, whether it is practical or theoretical, scientific or religious. In the introduction we examined some ideas about why approaching the world and human affairs through an exclusively scientific viewpoint is not enough, and why Lonergan believed religion must regain its social role in the discussion. If it seems that science and religion separated long ago and are only now gradually reconciling their differences, we can try to uncover some common ground. A potential starting point is the structure of knowing. For Lonergan, knowing fact or truth means correctly understanding experience. So too for the scientist does knowing fact mean verifying the hypothesis from the data, that is, correctly

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idealists are positions "of adult children." "Praxis and Ultimate Reality: Intellectual, Moral and Religious Conversion as Radical Political Conversion," 226.

[17] Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality: Intellectual, Moral and Religious Conversion as Radical Political Conversion," 226. It may prove a stumbling block for people to accept that objectivity is inseparable from subjectivity in terms of the knowing process. The test of Lonergan's theory, by asking "Am I a knower?" necessarily caters to both the self as object (wondering whether I am a *knower*) and as inquiring subject (wondering whether *I* am a knower). Yet if we are willing to test and accept the findings, according to Budenholzer, "our notion of the real world shifts dramatically. We have a tendency to presume that the really real consists in the hard objects of experience and that in knowing we get a true picture of those realities. But, in fact, the real is simply verified intelligibility – the real is the known, the object of experience, understanding, and judgement." Budenholzer, "Science and Religion: Seeking a Common Horizon," 359.

[18] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 214; Marsh "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 226.

understanding experience.[19] Both scientific and religious studies demand continuity and intelligibility in their disciplines. Even though the questions and the ends appropriate to each are different, the structure and process of knowing is the same.[20] Similarly, the motivation for knowing, wonder, is common to scientific and religious perspectives. As Budenholzer notes, stirrings of awe, respect, and reverence for the way the world works are experiences in both science and religion; however "the interpretations of those experiences and the trajectory along which they develop will be quite different."[21] Yet scientific and religious interpretations need not, and some would argue, cannot, be mutually exclusive. Budenholzer further notes, "The very tensions that have arisen in the West between religion and science are themselves indicative of this search for unity."[22] Much effort is now being put into narrowing whatever gap is perceived to exist between science and religion. Using the structure of knowledge as a starting point, and Lonergan's general empirical method demonstrated in self-appropriation, seems a viable place to begin building a common foundation.

Though Lonergan stresses the importance of self-appropriation, his account of knowledge includes belief. One person cannot know everything, in the sense of having found out everything there is to know on one's own. Because we are limited in what we can take in, process, and know, a large part of human living depends on belief. The body

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[19] Lonergan, *Insight*, 452.
[20] For an introduction to the commonalities between religious thought and scientific method, see Lonergan's article "Isomorphism of Thomist and Scientific Thought," 133-141. Over its history, science has been vulnerable to the "myth" of knowing. For example, despite its legacy in terms of developments in the scientific method, the science of Galileo's day equated Lonergan's "taking a good look" with what constitutes knowledge. Budenholzer, "Science and Religion: Seeking a Common Horizon," 353.
[21] Budenholzer "Science and Religion: Seeking a Common Horizon," 352.

of knowledge humanity draws upon as part of its history, science, philosophy, medicine, art, and so on, is a pool of collective knowledge. What one person knows in the fullest sense of correctly understanding experience, the rest of us usually must take on belief. For example, while reduplication of experiments is an important part of the verification process, once scientists establish the validity of a theory they do not repeat it endlessly; they are content to trust to an extent the previous findings of their predecessors. In Lonergan's words: "Belief, then, is an essential moment in scientific collaboration."[23] Indeed, belief is an essential moment in any kind of collaboration:

> Human knowledge, then, is not some individual possession but rather a common fund, from which each may draw by believing, to which each may contribute in the measure that he performs his cognitional operations properly and reports their results accurately. A man does not learn without the use of his own senses, his own mind, his own heart, yet not exclusively by these. He learns from others, not solely by repeating the operations they have performed but, for the most part, by taking their word for the results. Through communication and belief there are generated common sense, common knowledge, common science, common values, a common climate of opinion. No doubt, this public fund may suffer from blindspots, oversights, errors, bias. But it is what we have got, and the remedy for its short-comings is not the rejection of belief and so a return to primitivism, but the critical and selfless stance that, in this as in other matters, promotes progress and offsets decline.[24]

Thus, belief, as another form of knowing, adds a communal aspect to the structure of knowing. As such, the questions we formulate from an initial unworded wonder are influenced by the environment, both natural and communal, in which we live. We are a communal species by nature and although Lonergan notes that it is up to us to decide for

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[22] Ibid., 364. See also Gerald L. Schroeder, *The Science of God*, 5, where he notes that consistency of nature is a basic tenet of both scientific inquiry and biblical religion.
[23] Lonergan, *Insight*, 453.
[24] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 43-44.

ourselves what to make of ourselves,[25] he asserts that we also must be mindful that how we act and live influences others around us and vice versa. Belief is essential to Lonergan's notion of the human good; the human good is discussed extensively in *Method in Theology* and will prove to have import in our discussion of environmental ethics.[26] This will be taken up in the next chapter.

5. From Knowledge to Action

However, neither belief nor knowing of themselves tell us how to decide or act. Ethics is about more than just knowing. Ethics demands that the knower make a decision and take action once the facts of the situation are known. If wonder motivates knowing, the driving force behind ethics is concern. Previously we spoke of theoretical reasoning and the threefold structure of knowing made up of experience, understanding, and judgment. An allusion was also made to a fourth level of consciousness known as deliberation.[27] The fourth level moves reasoning from a theoretical plane to a practical plane because, in Lonergan's view, deliberation necessarily implies considering courses of action. The ethical process which arises is a present choice directed towards a future action; being future oriented, by its nature, it can only deal in probabilities rather than certainties.[28]

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[25] This is a trademark phrase of Lonergan's; see *Method in Theology*, 121 and "Dimensions of Meaning," 243.
[26] On the human good, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, chapter 2, particularly pages 47-55 for a discussion of the structure of the good.
[27] See Bruce Anderson, " 'Discovery' in Practical Problem-Solving" in *"Discovery" in Legal Decision-Making* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 131-142.
[28] Similarly, science, or indeed any discipline which subscribes to a generalized empirical method, also deals in probabilities.

In introducing the fourth level of deliberation, Lonergan's model of practical reasoning builds upon his previous model; it uses the seven acts and three levels of theoretical reasoning as its foundation to determine the facts of a situation and then adds another layer. The judgment of fact becomes the "data" for the process, but rather than ask, "What is it?" we ask, "What is to be done?" Direct insight suggests possible courses of action, which are subject to the question "Is it to be done?" Reflective insight lights the way to a judgment of value (at the level of deliberation). Previously we itemized the seven acts operative in the structure of wonder or theoretical reasoning; the structure of ethics or practical reasoning builds upon these seven acts and is followed by the remaining six:

8. questions for deliberation
9. direct insight
10. determining possible courses of action
11. questions for judgment of value
12. reflective insight
13. judgment of value

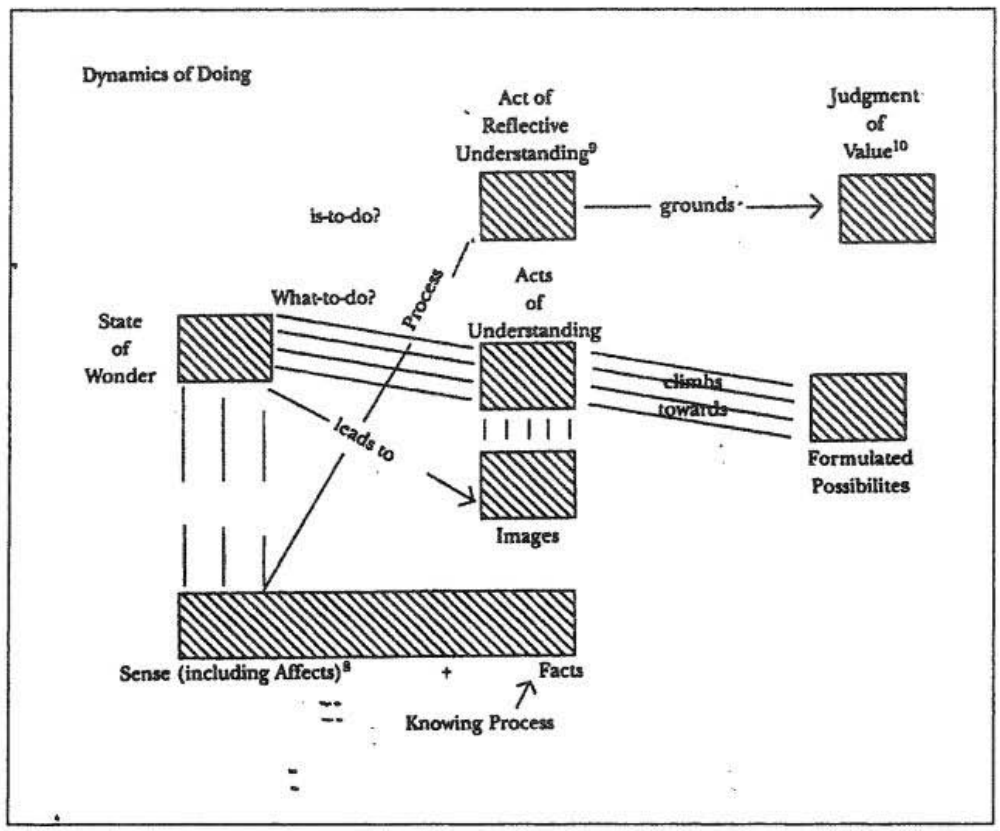

Figure 2.2: The structure of doing incorporates thirteen distinct acts (including the seven from the structure of knowing) at three levels of consciousness. From *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 18*, ed. Philip McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), Appendix A, 324.

As mentioned above, deliberation takes into consideration feelings in general and concern in particular. They are data relevant to the judgment of value, the same way that sense and consciousness are data relevant to judgments of fact. Feelings are apprehensions of value. Values are what determine how we act in any given situation.

Deliberation gives us a chance to reflect on what we value and on how those values affect our actions. On feelings, Lonergan is adamant that we tune into them:

> ...it is much better to take full cognizance of one's feelings, however deplorable they may be, than to brush them aside, overrule them, ignore them. To take cognizance of them makes it possible for one to know oneself, to uncover the inattention, obtuseness, silliness, irresponsibility that gave rise to the feeling one does not want, and to correct the aberrant attitude.[29]

Accounting for feelings is an essential part of self-appropriation. In addition, by "feelings" Lonergan does not mean the merely transient kind which vanish when our attention shifts to something else, such as impatience, amusement, fright, or surprise. There are abiding feelings "so deep and strong, especially when deliberately reinforced, that they channel attention, shape one's horizon, direct one's life."[30] The ultimate example of this is loving, where "mutual love is the intertwining of two lives. It transforms an 'I' and 'thou' into a 'we' so intimate, so secure, so permanent, that each attends, imagines, thinks, plans, feels, speaks, acts in concern for both."[31] The supreme expression of a loving relationship for Lonergan is this I-Thou of religion, the relationship of unrestricted love between God and humans.[32] This I-Thou relationship

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[29] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 33.
[30] Ibid., 32.
[31] Ibid., 33
[32] Lonergan was influenced by the work of Friedrich Heiler from the history of religions school, particularly by Heiler's essay "The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Cooperation of Religions" (in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, ed. Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959], 142-153). Heiler outlined seven features shared by the world's major religions, these being, in Lonergan's words, "that there is a transcendent reality; that he [sic] is immanent in human hearts; that he is love, mercy, compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer; that the way is love of one's neighbor, even of one's enemies; that the way is love of God, so that bliss is conceived as knowledge of God, union with him, or dissolution into him." *Method in Theology*, 109. It is this transcultural common ground between the world's religions which greatly interested Lonergan in his later writing, particularly the notion of unrestricted loving, which is integral to Lonergan's notion of religious conversion.

based on love has been integral to Christian discussions of environmental ethics particularly in the covenantal and stewardship traditions.[33]

6. Values, Freedom, and Horizons

If values are mediated in part by feelings they also form a hierarchy, identified by Lonergan in the ascending order of vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values.[34] In the first chapter, Lonergan's notion of a hierarchy of values was introduced. It was noted that Lonergan's hierarchy of values parallels Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Human beings have desires and needs to be fulfilled, and these, according to Maslow, must be met in a scale of preference. However, while this hierarchy of needs may be structured generally from the most basic physically (e.g., food, shelter, good health) to the most complex emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually (e.g., the need to preserve life, the need for approval, the need for love), the range of human needs is quite diverse and potentially conflicting. If we were governed by needs and made decisions based solely on satisfaction of needs and desires, there would not be much to differentiate us from the rest of the animal world, where instincts and need-satisfaction dominate. That we are concerned about the potential conflict of needs and that we tend to seek compromise suggests there are more things to take into consideration. Lonergan's hierarchy of values encompasses systems which meet our needs, but he adds the component of value which organizes and prioritizes how those needs are met. If we are oriented to particular values,

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[33] See Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Theological Resources for Earth-Healing: Covenant and Sacrament," in *The Challenge of Global Stewardship: Roman Catholic Responses*, ed. Maura A. Ryan and Todd David Whitmore (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). 54-66, especially her discussion on the contributions of sacramentality stemming from an I-Thou outlook .

that orientation will favour certain methods of meeting our needs over others; moreover, consistent orientation to value will provide a certain overarching unity and cohesiveness to social and cultural organization. For example, if equality of all people is valued generally in a community, one would expect the social and cultural organization of that community to reflect that. Other examples have been listed in the discussion of values and needs in chapter one.

The hierarchy of values is integral to Lonergan's discussion on transcendence. Each successive level, beginning with vital values, demands that people look beyond solely their own needs. Vital values concern cooperation for attaining basic needs such as food and shelter. Social values account for the fact that human beings order their communities. Cultural values suggest that people do more than make a living. Personal values acknowledge the uniqueness and freedom of choice of the individual. Religious or ultimate values claim that we are concerned with more than just day-to-day personal and interpersonal business; we are oriented towards transcendence and mystery. Yet by transcendence Lonergan also does not just mean "beyond human being"; Sauer argues that Lonergan generally means "beyond where one is, i.e., exceeding present achievements."[35] In this interpretation, Lonergan's challenge of self-transcendence demands that we do better than we did yesterday, that we continue to build upon what we make of ourselves. Although for Lonergan, this ultimately points towards God who is beyond human being, this general interpretation of transcendence does not require any

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[34] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 31
[35] Sauer, 246.

specific religious orientation, and so offers a potential common starting point for the religious and non-religious alike.[36]

Lonergan makes the distinction between self-regarding feelings, which are pleasures, pains, desires, and fears, and disinterested feelings which recognize excellence in values like health and strength, beauty, successfully functioning social order, combat against decline, and self-sacrificing love.[37] He claims that using only the criterion of personal agreeableness or disagreeableness in making our decisions is misleading, for "[w]hat is agreeable may very well be what also is a true good. But it also happens that what is a true good may be disagreeable."[38] Yet certain people are willing to submit to the disagreeable if it is for the greater good. What truly is good does not always feel good; so while feelings reveal values–sometimes wrenchingly, as Lonergan notes–it is those values which move us towards self-transcendence. For the sake of those values we would be willing to transcend ourselves, and transcend disagreeable feelings in the process.[39]

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[36] There is always the problem of balancing pursuit of transcendence with appreciation of immanence, a dichotomy which has long been at the heart of clashes between the secular and the religious. Oftentimes religion has been accused of focusing so much on the transcendent (in the sense of beyond human being) that the worldliness or immanence of our existence is undervalued. On the one hand, overemphasizing transcendence relegates God to being a distant, unreachable deity whose presence cannot be seen in our daily lives. On the other hand, it has been argued that overemphasis on immanence tips the scales too much on the side of secularism, where "loss of reference to the transcendent will rob symbol, ritual, recital of their proper meaning to leave them merely idol and magic and myth." Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 111.

[37] Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 173.

[38] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 31.

[39] Ibid.; As Lonergan's hierarchy of values parallels Maslow's hierarchy of needs, another parallel may be drawn between Lonergan's notion of development and psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg's three stages of moral development: preconventional, conventional, post-conventional. See Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*, 1st ed (San Fransisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

However important feelings are as data for understanding values and as the will's momentum, Lonergan acknowledges that they cannot of themselves bring about commitment. If feelings initiate the process of deliberation in ethics, commitment is what finalizes deliberation. Here Lonergan discusses human freedom and the potential for straying away from commitment:

> For commitment is a personal act, a free and responsible act, a very open-eyed act in which we would settle what we are to become. It is open-eyed in the sense that it is consciously a decision about future decisions, aware that the best of plans cannot control the future, even aware that one's present commitment however firm cannot suspend the freedom that will be exercised in its future execution.[40]

Freedom is an essential notion in Lonergan's philosophy. In introducing the fourth level of consciousness as deliberation and asserting its importance to the field of ethics, Lonergan accounts for the role of freedom: "One has to have found out for oneself that one has to decide for oneself what one is to makes of oneself; one has to have proved oneself equal to that moment of existential decision; and one has to have kept on proving it in all subsequent decisions, if one is to be an authentic human person."[41] Authentic living and self-determination go hand-in-hand. However, we must note that there are two types of freedom: what Lonergan calls horizontal freedom and vertical freedom. Self-determination has elements of both.[42] Horizontal freedom refers to choices made within the bounds of a horizon with the result of new answers to old questions. Vertical freedom refers to our ability to change our horizons, to ask completely new questions and search out the new answers.

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[40] Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 173.
[41] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 121.

Horizons are defined literally as "a maximum field of vision from a determinate standpoint."[43] Horizons may be considered in the fact that for each of us the world is bounded by the limits of what we know and which questions we ask.[44] Horizons may expand or shift (or indeed, shrink) depending on what we experience, how we interpret the experience, how our assumptions are challenged, and how open we are to development. The choices we make express our commitments. Horizons are the span of knowledge in which we make our deliberations. However, we also choose our horizons ourselves and as such are responsible for them.[45] One exercises freedom in taking a stance and selecting a horizon in which to live, whether implicitly or explicitly.

Lonergan notes that many of us do not take advantage of this freedom to choose horizons and change horizons, much to the detriment of our personal and communal growth: "deliberate decision about one's horizon is high achievement. For the most part people merely drift into some contemporary horizon. They do not advert to the multiplicity of horizons. They do not exercise their vertical liberty by migrating from the one they have inherited to another they have discovered to be better."[46] This drift runs counter to "authentic" living, for living authentically means staying true to the transcendental precepts, be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible. To abdicate the responsibility to choose and to not exercise this vertical liberty is to cheat oneself out of the opportunity to develop into a better person.

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[42] Sauer, 69.
[43] Budenholzer "Science and Religion," 352-353.
[44] Ibid., 352.
[45] Sauer, 240-241.
[46] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 269.

Freedom of choice and self-determination are linked to change. As mentioned in the introduction, Lonergan was interested in change, and more importantly, with development, evidenced in his interest in history and in his perception of a "troubled consciousness" in our time. Change is a feature of experience and can be either positive or negative. Development concerns intelligent deliberation and aims at authentic progress. Change occurs in human society with a shift in the controls of meaning. A change in meaning has long range effects. So too, change may occur on an individual basis, when an individual experiences a personal shift in meaning. Change is a constant possibility and is inevitable for most people trying to live "authentic" lives. However, lasting and "authentic" development can only come about when a person is clear on where he or she stands right now. Otherwise, when confronted with something new, and the consequent choice to accept or reject the new, one risks making an arbitrary and ill-prepared decision and thus "relinquishing the task of establishing coherent meaning in life."[47] This is why Lonergan considered it important to pay attention to how we know. This introspection and self-appropriation sheds light on what, how, and why exactly we know.

7. An Introduction to Conversion

At this juncture it is fitting to introduce the concept of conversion, which is the crux of this thesis and indeed of much of Lonergan's writing. Conversion is a loaded term in today's society, often conjuring up images of fundamentalist exhortations,

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[47] Brian V. Johnstone, "The Experience of Conversion and the Foundations of Moral Theology," *Eglise et*

missionary work, sudden and dramatic changes of lifestyle. Those wary of the term may suspect an element of coercion in any conversion experience. Lonergan adopts a more nuanced view. Rather than understanding it in a sectarian sense as concern for changing others, Lonergan believes it must first begin with the self.

Conversion is necessary when there is a gap between experience and reality. Sometimes the gap may be closed simply, with the addition of more information. If an experience is more than a passing "happening" and turns out to be something more profound, in order to integrate this new profundity into one's life one must assess the measure of unity and cohesion of one's previous interpretations of life experiences. The experience of something new, especially something profound, often makes one more aware of where one stands. This awareness, held up against a new experience, either leaves one affirming that life is as one has assumed it to be, or else forces a re-evaluation by radically challenging one's assumptions.[48] Lonergan argues that such circumstances demand much: grasping a new level of consciousness, re-shaping one's life meaning, altering one's desires and goals – things which require a total personal transformation.[49] In terms of horizontal and vertical freedom conversion is an exercise of vertical freedom, a change between horizons, not within a horizon.[50] Conversion is also more than any particular change or any particular development; it is a "radical transformation on which follows, on all levels of living, an interlocked series of changes and developments. What hitherto was unnoticed becomes vivid and present. What had been of no concern

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Théologie 15 (May 1984) : 187.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 237-238.

becomes a matter of high import."[51] It is a transformation where "[i]t is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away."[52] Moreover, despite the fact that conversion may be punctuated or first noticed explicitly through sudden insights or "momentous judgments and decisions," Lonergan asserts that it is a prolonged process. It is a progressive deepening and broadening of the self and the self's understanding of the world where previous knowledge and commitment is used as the foundation for further building. It may also involve a "wrenching" that sees those previous judgments and commitments obliterated.[53] Neither conversion nor the self-appropriation vital to conversion[54] can be confined to the pages of a book or be achieved through belonging to a special group.[55] Conversion and self-appropriation are fundamentally matters of human existence, in this case a "heightened grasp" of it.[56] Both are intensely personal.

Conversion gives us new selves to understand; a new understanding of self also leads to a modification in understanding the things around us. Lonergan says: "The convert apprehends differently, values differently, relates differently because he has become different. The new apprehension is not so much a new statement or a new set of statements, but rather new meanings that attach to almost any statement. It is not new values so much as a transvaluation of values."[57] Nevertheless, conversions are not

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[51] Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context,"13.
[52] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 130.
[53] Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 225.
[54] This is not to imply a predetermined order of conversion in terms of Lonergan's identification of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Self-appropriation is vital to conversion but it is not necessarily the impetus for conversion. A discussion on the "order" on conversion and the relationship between the three types follows in chapter three; see also Rende, *Lonergan on Conversion: The Development of a Notion.*
[55] Rende, 156.
[56] Rende, 156.
[57] Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," 13.

arrived at by a process of logic. The change is a radical shift in one's horizon. That revision of stance then goes on to affect all other aspects of how one thinks and perceives. It "enriches [one's] understanding, guides [one's] judgments, reinforces [one's] decisions."[58]

Above we addressed the gradual and normal maturation from infant to adult in terms of cognitional development. Like cognitional development, conversion is an ongoing process. But conversion also implies more than cognitional development. It is not just about broadening our horizons or expressing ourselves in bigger words. According to Butler "[i]t implies an aversion, a change of direction and a consequent total reconstruction of our existence, a reconstruction not to be achieved without pain, and even a repudiation of, and 'death' to, our former existence."[59] For Lonergan, conversion must have positive connotations or else it is not authentic. Authentic conversion means consonance between people's knowledge, thoughts, and actions in accordance with the transcendental precepts.

Lonergan identifies three types of conversion: intellectual conversion, moral conversion, and religious conversion. Religious conversion will be addressed in the following chapter. The other types of conversion, intellectual and moral, have been alluded to, without calling them as such, in the discussion on the four levels of consciousness. It is expanding upon intellectual and moral conversion which will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

If wonder, defined as the pure desire to know, is the orientation for knowing, then

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[58] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 131.

"[i]ntellectual conversion is the discovery of the significance of the pure desire to know."[60] The pure desire to know is the fuel which drives our questioning and which pervades and guides all our cognitional operations.[61] Intellectual conversion weaves together several threads of thought thus far addressed. It begins with self-appropriation and the knowing of knowing, that is, being aware of and comprehending the structure and process of authentic knowing as discussed above in the levels of experience, understanding, and judgment. Lonergan establishes his opposition to the myth of knowing ("that knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there now to be looked at."[62]) and in so doing demonstrates how intellectual conversion works. He defines intellectual conversion as a "radical clarification" which results in the elimination of the myth of knowing.[63] A suitable philosophical analogy is that of Plato's Cave. As the cave-dweller believed shadows on a wall constituted what was real, so too the intellectually unconverted believe knowing to be merely looking. As the cave-dweller emerges into the sunlight to realize what is truly real, so too the intellectually converted know knowing to be the threefold structure of experience, understanding, and judgment.[64] Because he claims a recognition of authentic knowing, Lonergan himself is the prime example of intellectual conversion and so is seen to prove his point by example.[65]

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[59] B.C. Butler, "Bernard Lonergan and Conversion," *Worship* 49 (June-July 1975) : 330.
[60] Rende, 183.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 238.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 229.
[65] Conn notes that *Insight* was dedicated to the task of intellectual conversion. Walter E. Conn, "Bernard Lonergan's Analysis of Conversion," *Angelicum* 53, no.3 (1976) : 367.

The intellectually converted recognize and try to practice consistently the norms of knowing: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible. One freely chooses to accept these precepts and so freedom is an integral component of intellectual conversion.[66]

As intellectual conversion discovers the pure desire to know, moral conversion discovers the importance of disinterested or impartial feeling. As mentioned before, feelings reveal values. Lonergan defines moral conversion as "when one chooses and decides according not to satisfactions, but rather values, or what is truly good."[67] Where satisfaction and values conflict, value will be preferred. Self-interested feelings will defer to disinterested feelings. As intellectual conversion is the pursuit of truth, so moral conversion is the pursuit of value. Values deal in what ought to be, not necessarily in what is so. Because of this, moral conversion is oriented towards commitment and action to bring about what ought to be. It transcends the here and now and drives us to reinterpret our relationships with each other and the world around us.[68]

Freedom is also an essential element of moral conversion, since moral conversion is another exercise of vertical freedom. According to Lonergan, the morally unconverted live life to fulfil their needs and desires; self-satisfaction informs all decision-making. Morally converted people transcend themselves because decisions are now made according to a new set of criteria which revolve around value. Included in this is the

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[66] Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 225.
[67] Lonergan, Method in Theology, 240.
[68] James J. Walter, "The Foundations of Christian Moral Experience," *Eglise et Théologie* 16 (May 1985) : 170.

asking of "radically new existential questions about the meaning of persons" which includes not only the self but others.[69]

Moral conversion is more than just asking questions, however. We need to add the component of action, for it is not enough just to know (like the intellectually converted) what is true and good; Lonergan was adamant that one must be consistent between what one knows and how one acts in order to fulfil his definition of authenticity.[70] We must note as well that moral conversion is not a singular event. It is "a commitment to never-ending self-improvement," because even after one is morally converted one must constantly battle bias. In Lonergan's words, "[a] conversion does not result in perfection but rather in an awareness of or sensitivity to what ought to be."[71] This includes "conquering the jungle of personal prejudices and biases, ...developing knowledge of concrete human realities and possibilities of scrutinizing the scale of preferences, ...listening to criticism and protest, ...[and] learning from others."[72]

Although explored in a Christian context, Lonergan's notion of conversion may be applied to non-religious contexts, according to some scholars.[73] The transcultural applicability Lonergan sought in formulating his cognitional theory appears straightforward enough in terms of knowing. To be intellectually converted means to consciously accept the premise which states that knowing is correctly understanding experience. It is also an acknowledgment of the related precepts: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible. Lonergan argued that it is within the grasp of

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[69] Ibid., 179.
[70] Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 229.
[71] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240.
[72] Johnstone, "The Experience of Conversion and the Foundations of Moral Theology," 197.

all human beings to live by the precepts, and he did not call upon any specific doctrine or dogma or tradition to make this point. Similarly, it seems that an orientation to deliberating upon and choosing values by which to live, regardless of what those particular values may be, is a point common to all humanity. Defining and discussing moral orders has occupied human thought for millennia. Again, Lonergan's position does not depend upon any particular faith tradition. Human beings value, and it is our responsibility to choose value over mere satisfaction if we want to live authentically. However, Lonergan is now to claim that sustained moral conversion can only really come about once we fall in love. Conn, explaining Lonergan, adds that to be in love is the only way to "escape the centripetal force of our persistent egocentric gravity."[74] This being in love is what Lonergan chooses to call "religious conversion." The label alone may be enough to turn some non-religious away and make non-religious and religious alike jump to certain assumptions. Love is a complex subject at the best of times, occupied in multi-purpose use in common, contemporary, and secular contexts, and its use in combination with the notion of conversion merits some clarification and reflection. It is this task that we turn to explore in the next chapter.

8. Summary

The study of conversion is meant to demonstrate a viable framework from which to discuss issues of ethics. Lonergan begins with a focus on a cognitional theory highlighting the invariance of human knowing and the importance of self-appropriation.

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[73] Walter, "The Foundations of Christian Moral Experience," 177.

This sets the stage for an exploration of collective responsibility. His cognitional theory enables him to posit the possibilities of and necessity for intellectual conversion and the criteria for verifying if intellectual conversion has occurred. The transcendental precepts serve as norms for "authentic" knowing and for determining how intellectual conversion might occur. Lonergan's attention to moral conversion emphasizes self-transcendence, where one chooses to defer to value over one's own satisfactions. The allusion has already been made that for Lonergan the ultimate form of self-transcendence is loving without restriction. It will be argued that this too has cross-cultural applicability.

Conversion, like ethics, necessarily entails decisions about action; not only that, but it demands consonance between thought and action. This is the crux of Lonergan's notion of conversion. We will now explore the role of love in achieving this consonance.

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[74] quoted in ibid., 180.

Chapter Three: Conversion

In the preceding chapter I introduced the notion of conversion and two of the three types of conversion Lonergan identified. This chapter will introduce Lonergan's notion of religious conversion and further explore its relevance in the context of Lonergan's views of the human good and societal progress and decline. We will proceed with an eye towards setting up the question in the final chapter of whether there might be an approach to Roman Catholic environmental ethics from a Lonerganian viewpoint.[1]

1. Decline

If the human condition were perfect, there would be no need to discuss conversion. However, the human condition is always in a state of tension between what it is and what it can or ought to be, between authenticity and inauthenticity. If we are in a constant state of flux, it is not enough to speak of conversion as change; rather it is development under certain guidelines or norms. In all human endeavours, there is progress and decline. So too in the messy business of conversion is there achievement and failure, compromise and conflict. First there is tension within an individual between

[1] Conversion seems to be a recurring theme on which Lonergan worked over the years in his writing. According to Rende, the notion of religious conversion was introduced first in *Grace and Freedom*; *Verbum* hinted at the notion of intellectual conversion and the idea was developed more fully in *Insight*. *Method in Theology* on the one hand made the distinction between intellectual, moral, and religious conversion and on the other hand unified them in terms of considering them as types of self-transcendence. Rende, 173. Lonergan described conversion several different ways over his career: in terms of grace in *Grace and Freedom*, in terms of "intellectual light" in *Verbum*, as reflective self-appropriation of the subject in *Insight*, and as a movement into the horizon of the transcendental notions in *Method in Theology*. Rende 178. Rende further claims that although references to conversion became prominent only in the latter part of Lonergan's career when it became a foundation for his theological method, the notion had early beginnings and underwent considerable development over the years. Rende 212.

what one is and what one can be, even if one is open to conversion. There is also the equally difficult tension between the converted and the unconverted trying to relate to each other. In the previous chapter we noted Lonergan's description of intellectually converted and unconverted ways of thinking as seen by contrasting the critical realists with naive realists, idealists, and empiricists. Each way of thinking is opposed to the other. Sauer further elaborates, calling the positions dialectical; according to him, "[r]esolving dialectical difference is not a matter of more data or a change in perspective but a vertical shift in horizon that is possible only with conversion."[2] So, for example, in Western society, we would not just need to sort out a plurality of views, but we would also need to consider the authenticity and inauthenticity in each. Authenticity is guided through following the transcendental precepts. In Lonerganian thought, conversion is the real key to knowledge and the lack of conversion is the real cause of misunderstanding.[3] Within a community, there will exist both the converted and unconverted, the authentic and the inauthentic. Despite exposure to the same philosophy and traditions, individuals may nevertheless find it hard to relate to each other. The possibilities for relating intelligently and responsibly would seem to present even more of a challenge in a society of plural views, where the potential for misunderstanding is significant.

Why is there such variance in human authenticity? If freedom is an essential part of the human condition, of choosing one's horizon and allowing one to subsequently change that horizon, then there are two sides to the coin. Free will and the consequences of free will may either help or hinder one's path of conversion. Free will allows for both

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[2] Sauer, 242-243.

wise and unwise decisions. Thus, if we carry with us the potential for conversion and progress, we also carry the risk of collapse. If progress is something that is built up slowly and with great effort on the part of the individual and a society, decline comes much more easily. If self-transcendence promotes progress, then it is the refusal of self-transcendence that leads to decline.[4] Conversion is generally hard to attain; Lonergan concedes that intellectual conversion is neither easy to grasp as a concept nor easy to verify if and when it has occurred. Similarly, the values demanded by moral conversion may be noble, but the pull of less-than-noble endeavours and desires is often stronger. Finally, raising the question of the relevance of religion to the common good may seem futile in a contemporary society exposed to a wide array of views which all compete for some measure of authority.

There are then several general obstacles which impede genuine progress, according to Lonergan.[5] These are referred to as biases, of which there are several types: dramatic, individual, group, and general. Dramatic biases, commonly called blindspots, are "aberration[s] of understanding," owing to often unconscious censorship of relevant questions and insights.[6] Blindspots restrict the full range of possibilities, of questions and answers. The effects of this are long ranging. When one ignores or is not open to insight, it is not just an isolated oversight: "To exclude an insight is also to exclude the further questions that would arise from it, and the complementary insights that would carry it towards a rounded and balanced viewpoint. To lack that fuller view results in

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[3] Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," 349.
[4] Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 55.
[5] For a more detailed discussion, see Lonergan, *Method In Theology,* 52-55, and *Insight,* chapters 6 and 7.
[6] Lonergan, *Insight,* 215.

behavior that generates misunderstanding both in ourselves and in others."[7] Such blindspots have a cumulative effect and make it increasingly harder for one to live authentically, to live attentively, intelligently, reasonably, and responsibly. The second obstacle is bias, of which there are several types. One may be individually biased, that is, one may be an egoist, where one's own interests, desires, needs, and satisfactions come first, to the disregard of others. This parallels Kohlberg's first stage of development, of a self-centred preconventional morality. There may be group bias, where loyalty to one's group is matched by hostility towards other groups. Group bias, like individual bias, is an interference with the development of common sense.[8] Either type of egoism, individual or group, conflicts with what Lonergan calls the good of order, or the social structures of a society.[9] Bias also may be temporal, or what Lonergan terms general bias, in the sense of excessive concentration on short-term goals and benefits to the detriment of the consequences in the long-term.[10] Unfortunately, biases are easy to keep and hard to correct.

When biases occur on a societal scale, then, in Lonergan's words,

> A civilization in decline digs its own grave with a relentless consistency. It cannot be argued out of its self-destructive ways, for argument has a theoretical major premiss, theoretical premisses are asked to conform to matters of fact, and the facts in the situation produced by decline more and more are the absurdities that proceed from inattention, oversight, unreasonableness and irresponsibility.[11]

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[7] Ibid., 214.
[8] Ibid., 247.
[9] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 54.
[10] Ibid., 53.
[11] Ibid., 55.

If biases have existed from the beginning, they contribute to a longer cycle of decline. The biases in a Christian context constitute sin. The propensity to sin is understood to be a natural part of the human condition. However, Lonergan believed there to be a longer cycle of decline at work, meshed with the "troubled consciousness" of contemporary times. This longer cycle "is characterized by the neglect of ideas to which all groups are rendered indifferent" so that fresh insights which could contribute to progress end up being ignored by the general populace. So it is that as hard as one tries to remain true to the transcendental precepts, sometimes the environment in which one operates is mired in attitudes of decline which perpetuate a deteriorating situation.[12] Biases raise the problem of evil. For Lonergan, humankind is not inherently evil. Evil arises from an absence of moral self consciousness in the structure of knowing: knowledge may develop and increase, but a moral consciousness does not keep pace. Evil also arises from systematic human bias which prevents people from seeking and creating value: if we are not open to asking questions and pursuing answers, we will neglect the full range of possibilities for value in human existence.[13] Biases cause evil because they prevent us from grasping and acting upon the truth and authentic value. Simply put, evil arises from a failure to be responsible.

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[12] This applies as much to cultures as to religions. Sullivan notes: "One of the most valuable features of Lonergan's emphasis on the crucial role of conversion... is his concern for a critical authenticity on the part of the subject participating in the learning process. For just as individuals can be inauthentic in their religious stance, so too can religious traditions lose their authenticity in relation to their roots. Self-critical, authentic subjects within a tradition, intellectually, morally and religiously converted, can bring that tradition back on course, and have a good chance of communicating with those outside the tradition. Outsiders so converted have a good chance of understanding the insider's point of view." Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," 351.

[13] Peter Monette, "Conversion and the Constitutive Function of Grace," *Science et Esprit* 44, no.1 (January-April 1992) : 80.

Lonergan acknowledges that human knowledge will be forever incomplete, but then argues that its nature is nevertheless to seek authenticity to the best of its abilities. Authenticity, he says, is gained through conversion and self-transcendence. Authenticity moves us beyond self-interest. Conversion is one step in the process of overcoming those obstacles to authenticity.

2. Religious Conversion and Love

Though authenticity may be gained through development and progress, it is not enough to speak of conversion simply as change, but rather as change for the better, according to certain operational norms. So it is that one also cannot merely speak broadly of change, but rather of three specific types of developments: intellectual, moral, and religious. Human beings, by the very structure of their consciousness, are both capable of, and oriented to, self-transcendence.[14] All three forms of conversion are what Lonergan calls modalities of self-transcendence: intellectual conversion is a cognitive self-transcendence; moral conversion is transcendence beyond one's own satisfactions; religious conversion is a total self-transcendence into a being-in-love.[15] If the

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[14] Sauer, 247.

[15] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 241. See also Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," 18-19. Although Lonergan deals in depth with the nature of conversion, other writers suggest specific ways that conversions actually occur. Johnstone emphasizes encounters with other people, either personally or through read works, or by oral anecdotes. He also explores the ways in which obstacles to communication may distort a conversion experience, noting, "the possibilities of change are dependent upon the adequacy of communication." Johnstone, "The Experience of Conversion and the Foundations of Moral Theology," 188. He further emphasizes narrative as being an important form of communication that could lead to conversion. His interpretation seems to echo Thomas Berry's own focus on the importance of narrative in grounding environmental worldviews; how conversion narratives and environmental narratives relate may merit further exploration. See Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), and Anne Marie Dalton, *A Theology for the Earth: The Contributions of Thomas Berry and Bernard Lonergan*, Religions and Beliefs Series, no. 10. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999).

unrestricted desire to know grounds intellectual conversion, and the experience of unbiased, "authentic" concern grounds moral conversion, it is the unrestricted being in love which grounds religious conversion. And, while questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation, may reveal the self-transcending *eros* of the human spirit, the fulfilment of that capacity to self-transcend occurs in the existential subject transformed by love.[16] Although the term "love" has served many purposes in everyday use, Lonergan set out to reclaim the transcendence behind love in terms of religious conversion: "Religious conversion is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations."[17] It is not only to be in love but to be in love with the transcendent:

> To be in love without qualifications or conditions or reservations or limits is to be in love with someone transcendent. When someone transcendent is my beloved, he [sic] is in my heart, real to me from within me. When that love is the fulfilment of my unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence through intelligence and truth and responsibility, the one that fulfils that thrust must be supreme in intelligence, truth, goodness. Since he chooses to come to me by a gift of love for him, he himself must be love. Since loving him is my transcending myself, it also is a denial of the self to be transcended. Since loving him means loving attention to him, it is prayer, meditation, contemplation. Since love of him is fruitful, it overflows into love of all those that he loves or might love. Finally, from an experience of love focused on mystery there wells forth a longing for knowledge, while love itself is a longing for union; so for the lover of the unknown beloved the concept of bliss is knowledge of him and union with him, however that may be achieved.[18]

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[16] Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," 19.
[17] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240. See note 2, Chapter Four, for a further discussion of Lonergan's use of the term "love."
[18] Ibid., 109. For Lonergan, the object of transcendent love is God; however, Lonergan's philosophy, influenced by Heiler, recognizes the common transcendent orientation of world religions.

Lonergan believed that loving in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfilment of our capacity for self-transcendence.[19] In this account of religious conversion, Lonergan also covers the intellectual and moral implications: by being in love without restriction one also longs for authentic value and authentic knowledge. Despite this, being in love is neither a product of our knowledge nor something which we choose; one does not reason oneself into being in love.[20] Love is meant to alter the pursuit of knowledge because one who loves will be more open to living by the transcendental precepts in the daily business of making decisions.

Religious loving is "without conditions, qualifications, reservations; it is with all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's mind and all one's strength." Yet, although this limitlessness may seem to parallel our capacity for unrestricted questioning, unrestricted loving "does not pertain to this world."[21] As human beings we may be able to question without restriction, but it is much more difficult, if not impossible, for a human being to love without restriction. This is why, as a Christian philosopher, Lonergan saw the need to be oriented to the transcendent mystery he knew as God; the fullest expression of love must be other-worldly. Religious conversion is the expansion of one's personal horizon from a focus on the finite world to the inclusion of the infinite, of matters of ultimate meaning and transcendent mystery.[22] For Lonergan, transcendent

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[19] Ibid., 106.
[20] Ibid., 123.
[21] Ibid., 242.
[22] Sauer, 245.

meaning completes finite meaning: although we are finite, we find completion in an orientation to the infinite.[23]

3. The Dynamics of Conversion

There has been some discussion among scholars as to how exactly the three types of conversion relate to each other.[24] Lonergan discusses the relationship between the three in terms of sublation:[25]

> ...what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.[26]

In this case, moral conversion sublates intellectual conversion, and religious conversion sublates both moral and intellectual conversions. Despite the fact that he describes moral conversion as going beyond intellectual conversion, and religious conversion as going beyond moral conversion, Lonergan also asserts that "[i]n no way are the fruits of intellectual or moral conversion negated or diminished" in being transcended by religious

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[23] Ibid., 246.

[24] See Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 225, and Johnstone, "The Experience of Conversion and the Foundations of Moral Theology," 199-200.

[25] Sauer notes that "sublation" was a term invented by Hegel to describe a higher idea taking up a lower one. Lonergan's use of the term is slightly different, according to Sauer, meaning that it goes "beyond what has been achieved by the addition of something new without the loss of what was taken up." Sauer 247. Conn is not completely convinced of the sublating relationship between the three, finding difficulties with Lonergan's position. He explains his reservations in "Bernard Lonergan's Analysis of Conversion," 391-392. Similarly, Johnstone has questions on the causal sequence between the three. He agrees that the process is not linear and proposes instead a spiral of "deepening religious transformation" which "draw[s] forth a deepening moral and deepening intellectual conversion." See Johnstone, "The Experience of Conversion and the Foundations of Moral Theology," 199-200.

[26] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 241.

conversion.[27] Lonergan argues that love actually does away with our old horizons and establishes new ones so that both knowing and valuing are transformed.[28]

However this is not to say that intellectual conversion forms the base on which the others rest. From a Christian standpoint, there is first the gift of God's love. Love reveals values and provides the strength to adopt those values. In those values are revealed the merits of believing truths taught by religious tradition and from this belief springs the opportunity for intellectual conversion.[29]

The relationship between the types of conversion is further complicated by the fact that partial conversions also may occur. The process is not linear: as Sauer notes, "one tends to go through the three conversions incompletely and simultaneously."[30] From our earlier discussion of bias and decline it is clear that such transformations of human beings struggling with ultimate meaning and transcendent mysteries tend to make up a story of "fragmentary triumphs in the midst of brokenness, partial success and failure."[31] Such mixed results is the nature of the human condition. As we have discussed, there are stumbling blocks to human development. If the state of being in love is the highest expression of self-transcendence, Lonergan acknowledges that "man's self-transcendence is ever precarious." It is human nature to be caught between opposing forces, always in tension between one pull and another, between nature and history, authenticity and inauthenticity, understanding and misunderstanding, progress and decline. Thus, "human authenticity [and thus self-transcendence] is never some pure and

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[27] Ibid., 242.
[28] Ibid., 106.
[29] Ibid., 243.
[30] Sauer 248.

serene and secure possession."[32] Conversions are rarely total and there are no fixed rules of how they are caused or how they proceed.[33]

Lonergan says that being in love is a gift, which in a Christian context is a gift from God.[34] In terms of environmental ethics, Carmody notes that religious conversion means that "the world becomes more gratuitous."[35] The world around us then cannot be taken for granted because "[t]he mystery of God, the love of God that has seized our heart and restructured our consciousness, puts brackets around everything. Henceforth everything has another dimension, a facet of non-necessity, a message that it is a gift."[36] Lonergan and Carmody see the gift of love as an eye-opening to the other gifts around us, notably the environment, its resources, its creatures, its cycles, its power, and its fragility. Both claim that it takes love to really appreciate and understand this.

While we may be conscious of being in love, this is not to say that we fully know how or why. Because of this, says Lonergan, it is the experience of mystery; such mystery evokes awe, and such awe is an experience of the holy.[37] Walter further elaborates on this in a non-Christian context: while Christians may consider the state of being in love a gift of God's grace, parallel experiences for non-Christians would be

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[31] Johnstone, "The Experience of Conversion and the Foundations of Moral Theology," 200.
[32] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 110.
[33] Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," 13.
[34] Yet even in a Christian context, Lonergan believed God's gift of love was transcultural: "For if this gift is offered to all men, if it is manifested more or less authentically in the many and diverse religions of mankind, if it is apprehended in as many different manners as there are different cultures, still the gift itself as distinct from its manifestations is transcultural... God's gift of his love is free. It is not conditioned by human knowledge; rather it is the cause that leads man to seek knowledge of God. It is not restricted to any stage or section of human culture but rather is the principle that introduced a dimension of otherworldliness into any culture." *Method in Theology*, 238.
[35] John Carmody, *Ecology and Religion: Toward a New Christian Theology of Nature* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 71.
[36] Ibid.

characterized by joy, self-giving friendship, and moments of undeserved benefaction.[38]

Conn adds that:

> A philosophical, humanist ethic may not wish to presuppose God and his love, but if it is to be authentically open it must be ready to recognize that the self-transcending love of man has no necessary limits. Indeed, insofar as a religious outlook may be specified by its recognition and acceptance of life as a gift, even the most circumscribed love of man, if it be genuine self-surrender, can be considered as the beginning of religious conversion.[39]

Generally speaking, the fullest expression of conversion, that which Lonergan terms "religious conversion," pertains to the subject who no longer understands the world just as it relates to oneself, but rather as things relate to each other; being in love is the highest human expression of self-transcendence where the individual is no longer at the centre of his or her universe. In this sense, one need not be religiously affiliated to accept this notion of religious conversion.

In the same way, Lonergan's general stance on the characteristics and embodiments of love is meant to apply to the entire human race: "once [love] has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts, it takes over. It is the first principle. From it flow one's desires and fears, one's joys and sorrows, one's discernment of values, one's decisions and deeds."[40] Love is evident in attitudes of "joy, peace, patience, kindness,

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[37] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 106.
[38] Walter, "The Foundations of Christian Moral Experience," 176. Lonergan believed that if feelings help discern value, the ultimate expression of feeling experienced in love discerns ultimate values, or religious values. In the Christian context, religious conversion encompasses the virtues of hope and charity, which some have taken to mean a preference for the poor and disadvantaged, such as is extolled by proponents of liberation theology and solidarity. On liberation theology, see Walter 181; on solidarity, see Monette, "Conversion and the Constitutive Function of Grace," 82. See also Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
[39] Conn, "Bernard Lonergan's Analysis of Conversion," 389.
[40] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 105.

goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control."[41] Yet inherent in the power of love is also the acceptance of suffering or sacrifice.[42] Religious conversion, and indeed any other conversion, is momentous and a monumental process; Lonergan does not hesitate to acknowledge that "the adjustments it calls for may be both large and numerous."[43] It is a commitment not just to recognize values or make decisions based on values, but to concretely live by those values, over the long term, and against major obstacles; it is finding consonance between knowledge, value, and most importantly, action.[44] So it is that though the love of religious conversion be a self-surrender, it is done without loss of the self.[45]

4. The Contribution of Conversion

Conversion is a notion that is instrumental in coming to an understanding of religion and, as we shall see, of religion's influence on environmental ethics. Conversion is based on degrees of differentiated consciousness (that is, of how conscious we are of the structure of knowing in its various realms and how easily we move between the differentiations), on the notion of horizon, and on our capacity for self-transcendence. To raise questions of ultimate meaning both lies within our horizon and may be satisfied, though never fully, depending on the degree of differentiated consciousness. Conversion, repeated at various stages of consciousness, allows for a progressive understanding both

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[41] Ibid., 266.
[42] Ibid., 242.
[43] Ibid., 123.
[44] Walter Conn, "Passionate Commitment: The Dynamics of Affective Conversion," *Cross Currents* (Fall 1984) : 330.

of religion as an institution (on the level of both a critical and appreciative appraisal) and as an orientation.[46] Sullivan summarizes:

> By embracing more and more closely the transcendental precepts, be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, one is enabled to develop a more highly differentiated consciousness and so widen one's horizon so that one approaches ever more near to the understanding of the transcendent. Adhering to those transcendental precepts will involve intellectual, moral and religious conversion.[47]

Furthermore, "[i]t is important to stress that the commitment that results from these conversions leads not to a closed state, but one of increasing openness – to truth, to values, to reality as the utterly transcendent which communicates itself to us and is the source and ground for our own self-transcendence."[48] Taking a page from Heiler's exposition on the seven shared features of world religions, Lonergan believed that such has been the aim of any religious tradition, and more generally, of any religious orientation. Lonergan considered religion to be a matter of conversion "in its preparation, in its occurrence, in its development, in its consequents, and also, alas, in its incompleteness, its failures, its breakdowns, its disintegration."[49] Religion is an expression of the process of conversion, a framework from within which (but also in some cases, beyond which) one explores questions of ultimate meaning and value. Following Heiler, the type of unrestricted loving integral to Lonergan's notion of religious conversion is one of the seven shared features of world religions. Recognizing unrestricted loving as a foundation for such a large part of the human population at least

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[45] According to Sauer, the "self" is transformed by religious conversion, but is not lost. Sauer, 245. The issue of self in terms of conversion is in itself worthy of a fuller treatment beyond the scope of this thesis.
[46] Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," 348.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 349-350.

raises the possibility for cross-cultural dialogue. Furthermore, because religions are composed of communities of believers, the social implications of conversion arise again.[50] Sullivan argues in favour of Lonergan's attempt to make conversion the centre of religious study because it facilitates a concentration "on the dynamic, personal, and concrete, rather than on the static, impersonal, and abstract" that he sees to dominate traditional theology.[51]

But why bother knowing about religious conversion for ethics? Conn says that the only truly effective moral consciousness is one that is open to the reality of love and transformed by love's power, that is, the religiously converted consciousness.[52] The point is to make it a habit in one's life; according to Rende, the state of being in love is the "habitual actuation of one's capacity for self-transcendence."[53] Love will inform decision-making. The already inherent desire for knowledge and value is enhanced and amplified by love, which leaves the subject open to a "richer context" in which to pursue

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[49] Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context,"14.

[50] The ideas of Marsh, who takes a decidedly political focus on the issue of conversion, may be used as an example of the possible social implications of conversion: "Intellectual conversion is useful to the extent that it arms one against positivism, scientism, reductionism, and technocracy. Moral conversion is useful in order to prevent a 'cynicism about means,' a playing fast and loose with democracy, freedom, equality, and individual rights. Religious conversion is useful in that it prevents a fetishizing or divinizing of the political party or state in a way that short-circuits meaningful reform or revolution." Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 238.

[51] Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," 350.

[52] Conn, "Bernard Lonergan's Analysis of Conversion," 390. Conn uses the terms "affectively converted consciousness" and "affective conversion." Affective conversion is a term Lonergan used in his later works, as found in "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 179. It seems to correlate to his notion of religious conversion, although there is some debate about this. On affective conversion, see Conn, "Affective Conversion: The Transformation of Desire," in *Religion and Culture*; Conn, "Passionate Commitment: The Dynamics of Affective Conversion," Walter, "The Foundations of Christian Moral Experience," and Bernard J. Tyrell, "Affective Conversion: A New Way of Feeling," in *The Human Experience of Conversion*, Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University, volume 19 (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1987). Doran suggests that there is a fourth type of conversion, which he terms "psychic conversion," in relating Lonergan's work to depth psychology. See Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

knowledge and value without fear: "One frees oneself from the unauthentic. One grows in authenticity. Harmful, dangerous, misleading satisfactions are dropped. Fears of discomfort, pain, privation have less power to deflect one from one's course. Values are apprehended where before they were overlooked."[54] Miller argues that conversion is essential to any truthful inquiry, regardless of whether the inquirer is consciously religious or not. He notes Lonergan's contention that conversion determines authenticity and that religious conversion in particular is fundamental to authentic self-transcendence. Because authenticity commands not only truthful intellectual inquiry but also moral deliberation, and because any inquiry is a form of self-transcendence, Lonergan believed the notion of conversion to be relevant outside theology and religion.[55]

5. Lonergan's Notion of the Human Good

Conversion is particularly important to Lonergan's notion of the human good. Here, theology and ethics are intertwined. In Lonergan's philosophy, having a notion of the human good is essential to sustaining a theology which mediates between religion and

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[53] Rende, 162.
[54] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 52.
[55] Edward J. Miller, "Newman on Conscience and Lonergan on Conversion: The Shadow of Plato," in *Critical Essays on John Henry Newman*, ed. Ed Block, Jr., ELS Monograph Series, No 55 (Victoria, B.C.: English Literary Studies, University of Victoria, 1992), 112. As an example of the relevance of conversion beyond theology, James Marsh's analysis of the opposition between the values embraced in religious conversion and those found in capitalism open up a discussion on free market environmentalism. Marsh argues that capitalism, with its orientation to the useful, has no use for the "contemplative attentiveness" of religious conversion: "From the perspective of religious conversion, the most valuable things in human life – thought, art, friendship, live, contemplation – are 'useless' in this sense [i.e. the dominance of capitalism's instrumental reason]. This perversion and absurdity lies in its subordinating the essential to the accidental, the 'useless' to the useful, the intrinsically valuable to the instrumentally valuable. That which should be highest becomes lowest and the lowest highest; that which should be the means becomes the end and the end becomes the means (Lonergan, 1972, pp. 101-109)." Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 237.

its cultural matrix.[56] Values are apprehended through feelings and affirmed in judgments at the fourth level of conscious intentionality, deliberation; this is the realm of ethics. It is more than just judgment of fact, a distinction thoroughly explored in *Insight*. Judgments of fact are intertwined with, and integral to, arriving at judgments of value, but ethics can never lose sight of preserving action as its final goal. Establishing and ordering values according to a notion of the human good enables individuals to identify their priorities in their personal lives and for communities to identify their common good. Community-minded interest groups, both religious and secular, argue that the "intense individualism" attributed to today's North American society thus does not represent the full picture of community interaction.[57] Those who support the principles of contemporary individualism appeal to the importance of freedom.[58] While freedom is an essential part of being human, Lonergan shows in *Method in Theology* that "[l]iberty is exercised within a matrix of personal relations."[59] That is, an individual experiences true freedom only within the context of community. Thus Lonergan's notion of the human good takes into account not only the individual but also the social realm. If an account of the human good is to include the social, it must pay attention to the ordering of that society. It is then no surprise that the human good emphasizes the good of order – the "concrete functioning of human cooperation to bring about a sustained succession of particular goods" – and the importance of community.[60] In practical terms as a condition of human freedom, this means that the human good concerns itself with the ordering of

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[56] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, xi.
[57] See Somerville, 5-8.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 50.

economies, government, legal systems, education, the family unit, churches, and all other organizations which bring order to human interaction. It is not hard to imagine how each of these influences our relationship with the environment and how the values of one may potentially conflict with what is best for the environment and with the values of other social systems.

The human good includes skills, feelings, values, beliefs, cooperation, progress, and decline.[61] Of particular note for this thesis is the emphasis on belief and cooperation. The ordering of society, with the goals of this ordering reflected in the structure of the good, is built around patterns of cooperation. Human beings as a species have certain ways of solving problems and meeting needs and it is taken for granted that most of us accomplish this through some level of cooperation and belief. A notion of the good itself will not guarantee proper action but rather points in the right direction and so facilitates solutions. So too do the transcendental precepts outlined in Lonergan's cognitional theory. They only guide knowing and doing; they do not guarantee a proper outcome but can only increase the probability of favourable results. Similarly, conversion serves to orient, not dictate, proper ways to live. The structure of the good, of knowing, and of the process of conversion is dynamic and cyclical, which is a recurring theme in Lonergan's writing.[62]

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[60] Ibid., 50.
[61] Ibid., 27; for a more detailed description of the human good, see *Method in Theology*, chapter two, especially page 48.
[62] Lonergan's prevailing philosophy and methods are mainly heuristic rather than dogmatic, as is seen explicitly in chapter 18 of *Insight*, entitled, "The Possibility of Ethics" where he states that "our concern is not to draw up a code of ethics but rather to meet the relevant prior questions." 618.

Sullivan warns that we must be careful of reading too much into Lonergan's use of the term "conversion." There are three traps to avoid. First, "[t]he conversions spoken of do not guarantee intellectual infallibility, moral perfection or spiritual sanctity." Conversions, being dynamic states, are frequently incomplete or precarious to maintain. Sullivan argues that we not take Lonergan's notion of conversion to be a resting-place, but rather a new vantage point towards a horizon which we constantly strive to transcend.[63] Second, he notes that we should not become preoccupied with the ordering arrangement of how conversions occur. Acknowledging what he considers to be some obscurity and ambiguity in Lonergan's explanation of the relationships between the types of conversion, Sullivan points out that what is most important is the necessity that the conversions take place at all. Each is necessary, each provides a context for the others, and each reinforces the contributions of the others.[64] Third, Sullivan argues that conversion cannot be understood simply as a Christian concept or as occurring only in a Christian context. Despite Lonergan's "committed denominational viewpoint," his work can be used by Christians and non-Christians alike; Sullivan asserts that "Lonergan is using the concept of conversion as a way of reaching the sources of disagreement and misunderstanding amid our pluralistic situation."[65] By identifying our capacity for conversion as rooted in human nature (the supposedly invariant structure of knowing, and the universality of wonder, concern, value, and questions of ultimate meaning) Lonergan attempts to bridge cultural and historical gaps with his method and philosophy.

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[63] Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," 350.
[64] Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion, and Objectivity," 350.
[65] Ibid., 351.

Implicit in Lonergan's transcultural applicability is its social relevance. In writing about conversion and the human good, Lonergan strove to emphasize the concrete nature of his argument; the opening sentence of the chapter on the human good in *Method in Theology* states bluntly: "What is good, always is concrete."[66] The good is intimately tied to social values and the social structure, among other things, and as was discussed previously, aiming for and achieving the good depends largely on cooperation. When speaking of social organizations, Lonergan points out that "[t]he family, the state, the law, the economy, are not fixed and immutable entities. They adapt to changing circumstance[.]"[67] Changing circumstances encompass things such as developments in ideas, concepts, judgments, evaluation, orders and requests.[68] If conversion is also about development, it would seem reasonable to conclude that developments in community organization and values would follow or should follow conversions at an individual level, as the community would then consist of converted individuals. Indeed, Sullivan argues that conversion "results in a focusing on the individual within a believing community."[69] Traditional theology tended to focus more on the universal, the abstract, the static, and a Platonically-inspired notion of an unchanging good. By contrast, Lonergan's notion of conversion focuses on the lives of individuals who are forever changing and developing, shifting the emphasis onto the dynamism of both individual and community.[70] A community made up of converted or converting individuals cannot help but experience

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[66] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 27.
[67] "Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 170.
[68] Ibid., 170.
[69] Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," 350.
[70] Ibid.

change itself, on all levels of organization, and so conversion becomes an issue of social concern as well.

Lonergan asserts that the results of conversion are worth the sacrifices and struggles and indeed seem necessary to living an authentic life and doing authentic work. Conversion is a pivotal notion in Lonergan's theory of functional specialization, a theory which relates divisions of work.[71] Lonergan argues that only through conversion, particularly intellectual and moral self-transcendence, can a person not only resolve one's own conflicts but also cast a critical eye on the work of others to discern ambivalence and appreciate achievement.[72] Through conversion one is able to rise above group bias, recognizing the shortcomings of one's allies and the strengths of one's opponents. In the context of environmental ethics, this means that one cannot become caught up solely in the interests of one's own group; it is an openness to all sides of the story in an effort to work towards a common good.

6. Progress

Our earlier discussion of bias and evil led into the ways that conversion may offset decline. With conversion to combat decline, it opens the way for authentic progress, which is a goal of any study of ethics. Progress also has a cyclical structure. Lonergan says:

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[71] Functional specialization is an eightfold division of work, as laid out in *Method in Theology*. Lonergan believed his own discipline of theology could be better organized in a "framework for creative collaboration" (*Method in Theology*, xi). The division is along the lines of eight distinct tasks: research, interpretation, history, dialectics, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. Lonergan's notion of functional specialties is now gaining more attention outside theology, being considered across diverse disciplines from economics to religious studies to law.

> Growth, progress, is a matter of situations yielding insights, insights yielding policies and projects, policies and projects transforming the initial situation, and the transformed situation giving rise to further insights that correct and complement the deficiencies of previous insights. So the wheel of progress moves forward through the successive transformations of an initial situation in which are gathered coherently and cumulatively all the insights that occurred along the way.[73]

In this one description of progress, Lonergan's cognitional theory is intertwined with his penchant for identifying patterns and cycles, which all add up to a heuristic method applicable to ethics: data is provided through experience of situations, questions are asked in an effort to yield insight to ultimately understand the situation, judgments are made in the form of policy adoption, and deliberations are enforced through action, which then leads to further insights and situations that will serve as new data for the whole process to begin again. This is the structure of decision-making. Progress is then the result of authenticity in knowing and doing. Knowing the elements which may lead to progress and how those elements relate on both an individual and community scale gives us a general framework through which to sort out particular situations. Knowing what progress is, what decline is, and how the two relate, gives us a basis for figuring out how collective responsibility can occur. Progress in environmental ethics includes an analysis of collective responsibility. Collective responsibility occurs as a result of conversion on a community level. Progress is seen to be cumulative development, a continuous flow of improvement, through the sustained observance of the transcendental precepts.[74]

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[72] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 252.
[73] Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History," in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 105.
[74] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 53.

> If the good is concrete, so are instances of authentic progress: Being attentive includes attention to human affairs. Being intelligent includes a grasp of hitherto unnoticed or unrealized possibilities. Being reasonable includes the rejection of what probably would not work but also the acknowledgment of what probably would. Being responsible includes basing one's decisions and choices on an unbiased evaluation of short-term and long-term costs and benefits to oneself, to one's group, to other groups.[75]

This description highlights the concrete guidelines of progress while respecting the necessary generality of an empirical method.

In any ethical decision the possibility of evil and unintelligibility must be accounted for. Lonergan argues that it is religious values which combat evil. Religious values, in the spirit of a binding together oriented to ultimate meaning, are meant to foster cooperation, which is the crux of human development. Human beings progress through cooperation, as Lonergan explains in his conception of the human good. Evil and the unintelligible are overcome by the healing capacities of love, which, by revealing values, transforms both the individual and the community. Thus, only religious values can adequately combat evil: "while secularism has succeeded in making religion a marginal factor in human affairs, it has not succeeded in inventing a vaccine or providing some other antidote for hatred."[76] The component of action, in both Lonergan's own philosophy and in ethics in general, is essential. He asserts that "it is not enough to remove mistaken beliefs and to reform the mistaken believer. One has to replace as well as remove, to build up as well as tear down. Mere hunting for errors can leave one a

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History," 106-107.

personal and cultural wreck without convictions and commitments."[77] Thus it is not enough to stand by and criticize. One must take part in both healing and creating in order for progress to occur. Lonergan's thought offers the tools with which to do it, and the signposts to guide the way. Included in these signposts are his three forms of conversion. Intellectual conversion will guide our quest for knowledge, for facts, for truth. Moral conversion will guide our deliberation in light of the facts. Religious conversion offers the virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, courage, faith, hope, and charity, sustaining virtuous action in the midst of biases.

7. Summary

As we have seen, Lonergan believed that progress and authentic human development, on both an individual and collective scale, are effected through the method of self-transcendence or self-appropriation, and through a triad of conversions. Intellectual conversion means dispelling the myth that knowing is taking a look. Moral conversion means values are chosen over personal satisfactions when the two conflict. Religious conversion means loving in an unrestricted manner. All three are inextricably linked and furthermore may apply outside the context of organized religion. They are particularly important in Lonergan's notion of the human good which is to a large extent oriented around social structures. Making decisions around how we collectively organize ourselves is fundamental to ethics and so the human good and conversion have significant social and ethical implications. Depending on what is valued in the social

[77] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 44.

order and how social policies are made, we are constantly walking the balance between collective progress or decline. The transcendental precepts, be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, and be responsible, which correspond to the different levels of consciousness in Lonergan's cognitional theory, serve as norms by which to determine our authenticity and to determine the degree to which we need conversion. Although Lonergan makes distinct the notions of knowing, doing, the human good, and conversion, in application these components of his philosophy interlock. All are dynamic and cyclical and all contribute to authentic living. All offer opportunities for praxis; they do not foretell outcomes but rather offer structures oriented towards proper conduct.

We move now to an examination of environmental ethics from a Roman Catholic perspective, or rather, several perspectives, since there is considerable variance of viewpoints within this denomination regarding the relationship between human beings and their environment. Environmental ethics is very much about social policies and social organization and the values inherent in our collective social dealings. While this may be so, there are those who believe religion has a contribution to make to the environmental debate, especially in terms of offering normative guidelines for behaviour and foundations for asking questions of ultimate meaning, the answers to which potentially influence how we relate to our surroundings. The question of what Lonergan's notion of conversion may contribute will be addressed with an eye towards arguing for the social relevance of religions such as Roman Catholicism in the environmental debate and identifying common ground on which to facilitate dialogue between religious and secular views of the environmental crisis.

Chapter Four: Catholic Perspectives on Environmental Ethics and the Contribution of Bernard Lonergan

Roman Catholicism may be used as a Christian example of a religious approach to environmental ethics. As stated in the introduction, overt Christian concern for the environment is a relatively recent turn of events. Because of this, ecotheology is still in its early stages. This chapter will explore the history of environmental concern within Catholicism and discuss some general themes which occur in Catholic writing on the environment. Such themes include anthropocentrism, stewardship, solidarity with the poor, economic development, and collective responsibility. The second part of the chapter will include an analysis of the potential contribution offered by Lonergan's notion of conversion. A preliminary evaluation of the Catholic environmental perspectives in the context of Lonergan's philosophy will also be offered.

1. Is Love Enough?

In the preface to her 2001 book, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*, Sallie McFague pointed out a deficiency in her previous book. McFague's previous work asserted the need for people to take a loving approach towards the tending to and use of nature. In *Life Abundant*, McFague noted:

> I realized love was not enough. I realized that we middle-class North American Christians are destroying nature, not because we do not love it, but because of the way we live: our ordinary, taken-for-granted high-

> consumer lifestyle. I realized that the matter of loving nature was a deep, complex, tricky question involving greed, indifference, and denial.[1]

McFague attempted to rectify what she saw as the inadequacy of relying solely on love with a call for action and change, particularly in economic terms; a call to live differently in order to love nature. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Lonergan's notion of religious conversion pivots around unrestricted love. On the surface one could dismiss this as yet another example of the "all you need is love" mentality which struck McFague as inadequate. Indeed, popular conceptions of love often portray it as passive, sentimental, or static. A reader introduced to Lonergan may come with this in mind and thus be disappointed at this seemingly cliched answer. On closer inspection, however, it is neither a cliché nor the final answer. As McFague says, love itself is a tricky question, both complex and deep. If love is an answer, it serves primarily to orient us, to set a framework in which to pursue other questions. Scholars have examined Lonergan's intention and use of the term "love" and describe it as action-oriented, revealing Lonergan's roots in both Aquinas and Aristotle.[2] Harkening back to Aristotelian principles of movement and rest, the being-in-love of religious conversion satisfies both demands: it is a dynamic state "that sublates all that goes before, a principle of movement

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[1] Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001, xi. The book to which she refers is her 1997 work entitled, *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

[2] Walter Conn particularly finds the need to clarify the term "love," to set aside connotations of "falling-in-love" as passive or sentimental; Conn states that "[b]y 'love' Lonergan clearly means the active, other-oriented principle of beneficence and benevolence." Conn, "Passionate Commitment: The Dynamics of Affective Conversion," 331. Conn then offers his own interpretation of the meaning of love: "...love is passionate; it is not a bloodless act of cerebral will. Second, as emotion, love is not blind, it has a cognitive character. Love is a passionate interpretation, judgment, decision, choice – unreflective and therefore undifferentiated (feeling, knowing, choosing are one). Third, though unreflective, love can be influenced, even transformed by reflection. Fourth, and perhaps most important, love, though a passionate desire, must be distinguished clearly from possessive desire." 335.

at once purgative and illuminative" and also "a principle of rest in which union is fulfilled."[3] If one were to combine this healing capacity of love with intellectual and moral conversion and Lonergan's transcendental method, it might offer the possibility of establishing common ground, a framework from which to discuss issues of environmental ethics from a Catholic perspective. After highlighting some of the major ecological themes in contemporary Catholic thought, we will proceed into a discussion of how Lonergan's thought might serve as an invitation to the discovery of the principles, norms and practice of authenticity in the context of environmental ethics. One might argue that Lonergan's relevance lies in the generality of his method; although he does claim certain norms and standards like the transcendental precepts to which one must remain true, he does not claim he has all the answers. Any approach that is based in Lonergan's thought would not involve prescription, leaving the freedom and the responsibility of making choices with the individual and groups. The framework which Lonergan sets up can be used as a guideline to counter relativist claims that there are no truths, yet it may offer enough flexibility for individuals to discover authenticity on their own.

2. Catholic Perspectives on the Environment

In the introduction to a collection of essays by Catholic writers concerning the environment, editor Michael Barnes notes: "There is more than one pattern in the history of Christian thought. It includes those who affirmed the earth as well as those who

[3] Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 175.

denied it, those who loved and praised it as well as those who sought to escape from it."[4] It is this diversity of views which serves to perplex anyone sifting through Catholic perspectives on environmental ethics. Are there common threads of thought within the tradition? If there are any unifying features, what does Catholic thought contribute to the wider issue of environmental ethics? While some say Catholic thought has a long way to go in adequately addressing the environment, those active in the movement to integrate religious views with ecology are emphatic that organized religion, here specifically Western Christianity, still has a relevant role to play. Fred Kreuger, director of the North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology argues that:

> [t]he undeveloped key to the environmental crisis...is to tap the power inherent in the churches. No other body has the potential to fire the conscience into renewed activity on behalf of the earth... As a people, we've been commissioned 'to replenish the earth' (Gen. 1:28). What other justification or incentive do we need to begin?[5]

Although quoting the same biblical exhortation which Lynn White saw as proof of Christianity's burden of guilt for environmental damage, Kreuger thinks there is at least an obligation of responsibility upon the religion. Others are more specific about what the Christian, and particularly Catholic, tradition has to offer. Evans says that "Catholic social thought is not long on environmental statements, but its inclusion of justice issues within those statements may be the greatest contribution the Church's social teaching can

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[4] Michael H. Barnes, *An Ecology of the Spirit: Religious Reflection and Environmental Consciousness,* The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society 1990, Volume 36 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 2.

[5] Quoted in Diane E. Sherwood, "Ecology and the Church: Theology and Action." *Christian Century* (May 13, 1987) : 472-474. http://www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/relsearchd.dll/showarticle?item_id=221. Accessed 16 September 2001.

bring to contemporary environmental debates."[6] Indeed, others have said that contemporary Catholic social ethics cannot be considered complete unless they take into account environmental issues.[7] It is this sense of responsibility for social teaching that can tie into Lonergan's notion of conversion. Conversion is the call to change not only on an individual level, but on a collective level.

To understand the context, we should first look at the documents produced by various authorities in the Catholic Church which address environmental issues. These would include papal encyclicals and documents produced from regional bishops' conferences. In addition to articles by Catholic writers referring to the extent of the Church's publications on the environment, one particular sociological study at the University of Notre Dame in 1999 undertook a survey to discover what, if any, scientific constructs concerning the environment pervaded recent Catholic papal and episcopal conference documents.[8] The objective was to establish areas of common ground, in the shared concern of science and religion for understanding how human beings and the environment relate, and to identify differences between scientific and religious perspectives in the use of scientific constructs such as "ecosystem," "population," "carrying capacity," and "holistic model," among other terms. The study noted, among its conclusions, that "[t]he main difference is the relative absence of two biological

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[6] Bernard F. Evans, "God's Creation and the Christian's Response," in *To Do Justice and Right Upon the Earth: Papers from the Virgil Michel Symposium on Liturgy and Social Justice*, ed. Mary E. Stamps (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 112.

[7] note 25, Christine Firer Hinze, "Catholic Social Teaching and Ecological Ethics," in *"And God Saw That it Was Good": Catholic Theology and the Environment*, ed. Drew Christiansen and Walter Grazer (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1996), 180.

constructs in the Catholic documents, carrying capacity and population, that may affect possible convergence of scientific and religious environmental understanding."[9] Relevant to the matter at hand, however, is the study's enumeration of Catholic documents referring to the environment. These include four papal sources: the 1979 encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, the 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the 1990 World Day of Peace Message entitled "The Ecological Crisis," and the 1991 encyclical *Centisimus Annus*. Also included are the episcopal conference pastoral letters: "Our Relationship with Nature" (1987, Dominican Republic), "What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land" (1988, Philippines), "Ecology" (1988, Lombardy, Northern Italy), "Promotion of Underprivileged Development: To Respect and to Develop Environment" (1989, Indonesia), "Companions in Creation" (1991, Florida, United States), and "Renewing the Earth" (1991, United States). The authors do not include documents from the Second Vatican Council nor the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as these did not contain clear examples of the scientific constructs the study's authors wanted to code. Interestingly, the authors say in a footnote that "in a preliminary coding of 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World' (*Gaudium et Spes*), we found no explicit mention of environmental constructs, and two brief and somewhat contradictory evaluations of population issues."[10] Yet in Bernard J. Przewozny's summary of the

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[8] Andrew Downs and Andrew Weigert, "Scientific and Religious Convergence Toward an Environmental Typology? A Search for Scientific Constructs in Papal and Episcopal Documents," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no.1 (1999): 45-58.

[9] Ibid., 45.

[10] Ibid., note 4, 56. Footnote 5 in the study states further that "[t]he Catechism of the Catholic Church in part emphasizes that humans should respect the earth and serve as its stewards. These concepts are to guide humans to make morally good decisions regarding the earth, although apparently in a way that benefits

history around the Catholic Church and the environmental crisis, he comes to a different conclusion, citing the Pastoral Constitution as the Church's first acknowledgment of an ecological problem.[11] From this brief example it is evident that the extent of the Church's published concern is open to interpretation. When the contribution of Catholic writers outside the Vatican is accounted for, the range of discussion opens up considerably. While there seem to be recurring themes in Catholic writing on the environment, the stances on the issues and interpretations vary. Further, new areas of Catholic philosophy introduced in creation spirituality, feminist theology, and liberation theology make the debate even more lively. The scope of this thesis will not allow detailed treatment of these latter areas of new ground, suffice it to say that they are expressions of contemporary concerns which help further test and expand the bounds of the tradition.[12] All have tackled the issues of environmental ethics, to varying degrees of

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them over nonhuman creatures." 57. A discussion of the extent of the Church's anthropocentrism will follow later in this chapter.

[11] Przewozny, "The Catholic Church and Ecological Concern," 54. See also his article, "Integrity of Creation: A Missionary Imperative," *SEDOS Bulletin* (December 15, 1988) : 363-373. Further comparison between the articles reveals that while Downs, Weigert and Przewozny agree on the papal documents which make explicit reference to the environment, Przewozny comments, without going into detail, that these are only examples of "numerous documents" in which "John Paul II took to heart humankind's need to improve its relation to the environment." Downs and Weigert imply in their study that they have accounted for everything they consider relevant in terms of scientific constructs. Przewozny also cites Pope Paul VI's 1971 Apostolic Letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*, as containing relevant forceful statements on urbanization, an issue which did not qualify as criteria under Down's and Weigert's scientific construct study. In contrast, Przewozny makes only passing reference to the results of episcopal conferences, citing specifically only the conference of the Dominican Republic, while Downs and Weigert consider the results of five other bishops' conferences.

[12] For example, on feminist theology, liberation theologian and priest Alberto Múnera states, "In a patriarchal and discriminative religion like Catholicism, we have to learn from feminist theology in which we find a serious promotion of justice, a wise control of population growth, an effective and balanced domestic economic management especially in poor populations, and a sensitive ecology." Múnera, "New Theology on Population, Ecology, and Overconsumption from the Catholic Perspective," in *Visions of a New Earth: Religious Perspectives on Population, Consumption, and Ecology*, ed. Harold Coward and Daniel C. Maguire (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 76. For other Christian feminist theology regarding the environment, see Mary Heather MacKinnon and Moni McIntyre, eds., *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995).

commitment and success. This thesis will limit specific discussion primarily to the broad and recurring themes in Catholic theology.

As a Western example of what issues are considered important in Catholic dialogue on the environment, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a statement in 2001 entitled, "Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good," in which it identifies the following themes: the universal common good; stewardship of God's creation and the right to economic initiative and private property; protecting the environment for future generations; population and authentic development; and caring for the poor and issues of equity.[13] An earlier statement from the USCCB, entitled, *Renewing the Earth*, issued in 1991, highlights many of the same themes and indicates that environmental ethics should take a God-centred and sacramental view of the universe.[14] Other themes arise in compilations of Catholic writing, such as cultivating an ethics of limitation, restraint, and responsibility in political, economic, and social choices, an emphasis on community, and compassion for all living things.[15] Writers reflecting on the Church's theology note that the view of creation and the environment is often sacramental, meaning that nature reveals and affirms the presence, power, action, and grace of God.[16] French argues that "one of the

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[13] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good," www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.htm. Accessed September 16, 2001.

[14] Hinze, "Catholic Social Teaching and Ecological Ethics," 167-168; United States Episcopal Conference, "Renewing the Earth," *Origins* 21 (December 12 1991) : 425- 432; see also Kathleen Braden, "On Saving the Wilderness: Why Christian Stewardship is not Sufficient," *Christian Scholars Review* 28, no. 2 (1998) : 260.

[15] Ryan, Challenge of Global Stewardship, 6.

[16] Drew Christiansen and Walter Grazer, eds., *"And God Saw That It Was Good": Catholic Theology and the Environment* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1996).

key distinctive features of Catholic moral theology has been an affirmation that God's reason and will may be discerned in the order of nature, in the natural law."[17] Others such as Rosemary Radford Ruether wish to make the view more covenantal, focusing on patterns of right relations.[18]

Whatever the stance in Catholic writing, there is little doubt that social teaching and social justice remain essential components. However, some scholars are concerned that this may lead to excessive anthropocentrism. Evans notes, "[w]ith its focus upon the dignity of the human person, any discussion of creation without references to the human person has been difficult for Catholic social teaching."[19] In terms of the environmental crisis, a perceived excessive anthropocentrism was a motivating factor in Lynn White's thesis that Christianity bears a large burden of guilt for environmental degradation. There is much discussion not only in Catholic circles but in a general Christian context as to the extent of anthropocentrism inherent in the religion. In his article, "The Integrity of Creation: Catholic Social Teaching for an Ecological Age," Denis Edwards outlines what he sees to be four possible relationships between human beings and other creatures: exploitative anthropocentrism, conservationist anthropocentrism, the intrinsic rights of

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3; William French, "Contesting Energies: The Biosphere, Economic Surge, and the Ethics of Restraint," in *The Challenge of Global Stewardship*, 128.

[17] Ibid.

[18] "In the covenantal tradition we find the basis for a moral relation to nature and to one another that mandates patterns of right relation, enshrining these right relations in law as the final guarantee against abuse. In the sacramental tradition we find the heart, the ecstatic experience of I and Thou, of interpersonal communion, without which moral relationships grow heartless and spiritless. The sacramental view can become a mystical aestheticism without the covenantal tradition to give it a grounding in ethical concreteness." Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Theological Resources for Earth-Healing: Covenant and Sacrament," in *The Challenge of Global Stewardship*, 55-56.

[19] Evans, "God's Creation and the Christian's Response," 112.

animals, and the intrinsic value of the whole of creation.[20] In an anthropocentric view, all other creatures are understood in terms of their worth to human beings, an interpretation which emphasizes the instrumental value of creatures and natural things rather than their intrinsic value. Edwards points out that anthropocentrism can work either to the detriment of the environment or to its preservation: "It would be anthropocentric to argue that human beings should mine a national park because they have a right to make use of natural resources. It would also be an anthropocentric argument to say that they ought not mine a national park because future generations of human beings have a right to a wilderness area."[21] As noted earlier, Christianity has been accused of being people-oriented to the detriment of the environment. This is understood in some circles as exploitative anthropocentrism which tries to justify itself in the biblical "subdue and dominate" exhortation of Genesis. Edwards argues that this has been taken out of its historical and literary context and simplistically applied to our modern context. He claims that without this verse "[t]here are no proper biblical or theological grounds for exploitative anthropocentrism."[22] For its part, the Catholic Church has never denied its human-centred priorities; however, some of its defenders claim they are justified in this ethic from an obligation to consider the consequences for their fellow human beings and for the generations to come. This is exemplified in the statements issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This reinforces Walter's statement that "the

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[20] Denis Edwards, "The Integrity of Creation: Catholic Social Teaching for an Ecological Age," *Pacifica* 5 (1992) : 183.

[21] Ibid., 182. At the same time, exploitative anthropocentrism is not exclusive to a religious view, as ethicist and animal right advocate Peter Singer points out in his examination of environmental ethics. Singer, 273.

primary value to which we are driven in our questions of value and are drawn in moral experience is the fundamental symbolic value of persons."[23] If this is so, what implications does this have for environmental ethics? Such thinking is an example of the second type of human-environment relationship described by Edwards, a conservationist anthropocentrism which values stewardship of the environment. Nature is conserved and protected with intentions meant to be wise and responsible, but creatures and the environment are still largely treated as objects. The third way of understanding the relationship between human beings and other creatures is that often espoused in animal rights philosophies. Animal rights activists usually champion the intrinsic worth and right to life of animals, based on the fact that, like human beings, animals can feel pain and thus their ethical interests have value equal to that of people. In explaining the fourth type of relationship, Edwards cites Albert Schweitzer's philosophy of "reverence for life" and ecologist Aldo Leopold's argument that ecological ethics rests on the sole premise that an individual belongs to a community of interdependent parts.[24] In this view the integrity of the whole system is more important than the interests of single entities within the system. Having laid out this variety of views, Edwards argues that Christian teaching and theology actually go beyond anthropocentrism to include an ethics of intrinsic value. He includes stewardship in this ethics, claiming that the notion of stewardship is not intrinsically anthropocentric.

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[22] Edwards, "The Integrity of Creation: Catholic Social Teaching for an Ecological Age," 184; Lynn White Jr. would be one such objector.
[23] Walter, "The Foundations of Christian Moral Experience," 179.
[24] Edwards, "The Integrity of Creation: Catholic Social Teaching for an Ecological Age," 186.

The adequacy of an anthropocentric view is still a point of contention between Catholic thinkers. William French, writing on "Catholicism and the Common Good," takes issue directly with Pope John Paul II's 1991 World Day of Peace Message, claiming that the Pope's "anthropocentric interpretation of the common good restricts the boundary of the moral community deserving of direct moral consideration to the class of human persons."[25] French argues that an anthropocentric view does not challenge the status quo, that being the moral tradition "which has for so long helped us enjoy easy consciences even as we have proceeded to exploit, develop, and destroy many species and ecosystems of the biosphere."[26] In this respect he does not think Catholicism offers the countercultural alternatives which religion often espouses. Edwards offers a different interpretation of the Pope's view. While Catholic social teaching may emphasize respect for life and the dignity of human beings, Edwards asserts that "the Pope clearly goes beyond an exclusively human-centred morality when he writes that the two guiding principles for a peaceful society are respect for life and the integrity of creation. This is a fundamental shift beyond anthropocentrism to a view that there is an intrinsic value to all life systems, to the whole biosphere, and to all of creation."[27] However, another interpretation, by John Carmody, takes issue with the Genesis exhortation, and what he sees to be the Pope's support of the traditional reading of "subdue and dominate." Furthermore, regarding the Pope's third encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, Carmody concludes that "the Pope almost makes forcing nature to productivity the measure of

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[25] William French, "Catholicism and the Common Good of the Biosphere," in *An Ecology of the Spirit: Religious Reflection and Environmental Consciousness,* The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society 1990, Volume 36 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994.), 187.
[26] Ibid.

human grandeur. Very little in his encyclical defends nature, or us human beings who are part and parcel of nature's ecosystems, from future pollution or despoliation."[28] That even the Pope's direct statements on the environment would prompt such diverse interpretations implies the ambiguous nature of the Church's commitment to environmental ethics. Critics charge that the scarcity of explicitly environmental statements is evidence of the Church's lack of concern. Defenders argue that the general nature of the statements is meant to be inclusive. Where the apologists understand those references to the environment to be allusive, critics see it as being elusive. This being said, there are several recurring and overt themes which Catholic thought uses to discuss matters of the environment.

Stewardship is a model offered up in many instances of Catholic environmental ethics. It is particularly emphasized by the official voices in the Church hierarchy, notably the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The mandate of the USCCB is to emphasize the "social mortgage" engrained in the Catholic social justice tradition. On this note the USCCB states that "[t]rue stewardship requires changes in human actions" on both a moral and technological level, adding "[o]ur religious tradition has always urged restraint and moderation in the use of material goods."[29] While admitting that Catholic environmental ethics is still a work in progress, the USCCB seems to think stewardship offers the best solution under the circumstances: "Stewardship implies that we must both care for creation according to standards that are not of our own making and

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[27] Edwards, "The Integrity of Creation: Catholic Social Teaching for an Ecological Age," 193.
[28] Carmody, 6.
[29] USCCB website, www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.htm. Accessed September 16, 2001.

at the same time be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish. It is a difficult balance, requiring both a sense of limits and a spirit of experimentation."[30] In their sociological survey of denominational differences within the United States' National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), Mark Shibley and Jonathon Wiggins voice reservations about the effectiveness of an ethics of stewardship. Shibley and Wiggins claim that, if unaccompanied by a strong sense of eco-justice, an ethics of stewardship will simply maintain the status quo: "stewardship fits with the traditional conservation and preservation agenda of the environmental movement."[31] Thus if the situation calls for drastic change, stewardship may not be convincing enough to bring it about. Matthew Fox, the driving force behind creation spirituality, does not support the notion of stewardship on the basis of what he perceives to be its upholding of an inherent human mastery or superiority over the rest of creation. He argues that there is no room in this ethic for wilderness, of just letting natural spaces exist without any human contribution. Stewardship for Fox implies planning and management, the assumption of a right to intervene on all of our surroundings which Fox sees to be highly presumptuous on our part.[32] Despite its opponents, stewardship remains a popular notion in Catholic environmental ethics because it imparts value to the natural environment while maintaining a unique relationship between human beings and the rest of creation.

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[30] USCC, Renewing the Face of the Earth: A Resource for Parishes, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1994), 5, as quoted in Mark A. Shibley and Jonathon L. Wiggins, "The Greening of Mainline American Religion: A Sociological Analysis of the Environmental Ethics of the National Religious Partnership of the Environment," *Social Compass* 44, no. 3 (1997) : 339.
[31] Ibid., 345.
[32] Matthew Fox, "Creation Mysticism and the Return of a Trinitarian Christianity," in *An Ecology of the Spirit*, 64-65. See also Fox's *Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988).

The notion of stewardship is linked to the notion of the common good. Being stewards of creation means that it is a collective responsibility with collective benefits. For some, the common good is quite specific, as in Carmody's position that the "good life" in harmony with the well-being of the earth and its population will mean "material sufficiency (but not luxury) and the preponderance of such spiritual pursuits as prayer, education, medicine, art, pure science, and social services."[33] Others prefer a more general notion, as in the Church's adoption of the thought of Thomas Aquinas on natural law.[34] Aquinas defined "law" primarily in terms of the common good. According to William French, Aquinas "situates analysis of the good of human communities explicitly within affirmations about the broader common good, that of the community of creation." It is the recovery of this notion of natural law which could be beneficial to environmental ethics. French goes on to add that "[r]ecovery of this tradition which firmly understands that human society is a participant within a yet broader community should help Catholics of all stripes begin to appreciate the creation-centred character of their own tradition."[35] However, French qualifies his view of the adequacy of the common good. Like stewardship, he does not see the common good as providing a strong enough challenge against potentially exploitative anthropocentric values. There is still the problem of good intentions going bad. If we make decisions collectively, we still may be blinded by the group egoism which Lonergan warns against. However, as will be discussed shortly,

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[33] Carmody, 83.
[34] French, "Contesting Energies," 128-129.
[35] Ibid.

Lonergan's notion of conversion may offer a potential way to create and to heal which leads beyond bias into authenticity.

Another aspect of the common good in Catholicism is the notion of authentic development. While environmentalists are often wary of references to development in the context of ecological integrity, Christiansen explains that the Catholic notion of authentic development "unlike reductionist concepts of economic growth, contains built-in restraints and limits that help it readily cohere with an ecological reading of the common good."[36] Authentic development encourages moderation or limitation, especially in consumption. Catholic thinkers argue that there is a dual purpose of moderation in terms of the economic split between "developed" and "developing" nations: on the one hand, developing nations must realize that their goal is not to meet the current, materialistic, lifestyle frequently found in developed countries, and on the other hand, developed nations need to curb their excesses by refusing to cling to the idea of unlimited economic expansion and unrestricted consumption. The earth, with finite resources, cannot support infinite growth envisioned by industrial nations, much less can the whole world aim for the material standard of living to which we are accustomed in the Western world. Authentic development is concerned both that poorer nations achieve an adequate standard of living and that richer nations do not exploit the riches they possess. The Church applies its call for moderation in the use of material resources to all

[36] Christiansen, "Ecology and the Common Good: Catholic Social Teaching and Environmental Responsibility," in *"And God Saw That It Was Good": Catholic Theology and the Environment*, 185.

nations, and so it frequently ties in any discussion of environmental ethics with economic concerns.[37]

Such concern with economic justice means that the Church's social justice agenda also extends to caring for the poor, or, from a liberation theology stance, proclaiming solidarity with the poor.[38] According to this theology, the environment is inseparable from the economic and political policies which Catholic social teaching seeks to make just. Bishop Alberto Múnera, S.J., a proponent of liberation theology, claims that, if the poorer populations are partially responsible for environmental degradation, it is because they are victims of economic and political injustice:

> The fast growth of poor populations and migrants frequently leads them to establish their settlements in fragile environmental places or in marginal suburban areas where inhuman standards of life deteriorate the environment. They suffer from the lack of education, economic incapacity, and from the very harm they must do the environment simply to survive. The poor also bear the brunt of environmental damage since the rich gobble up the rare resources. The majority of the world's peoples are poor and they are the prime victims—along with future generations—of the ecocide that is ongoing.[39]

Múnera further says that the government, far from being an evil to be dispatched, should be considered the "prime agent of distributive justice" responsible for furthering the common good and protecting the poor and the powerless. Although he laments the

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[37] Ibid., 187.

[38] Monette links solidarity with the need for conversion and discovering our authentic selves: "The solution [which Lonergan, Monette, and other Christian thinkers say is provided by God] sets in motion within the person a developmental, yet random, spontaneous orientation toward creating value, making meaning and becoming authentic selves within one's lived experience. This spontaneous orientation provides the opening up of oneself such that one can become caught up within the lives of those amongst oneself who vividly and most systematically suffer the fact of evil. This being caught up in the lives of the oppressed, the marginalized and the poor is the value of friendship called solidarity. In solidarity, one becomes spontaneously orientated in their whole being; intellect, willing, sensitivity and innerself, toward loving those whom the world loves least." Monette, "Conversion and the Constitutive Function of Grace," 82.

reality of corrupt political systems, in Catholic social justice theory a well-organized and just government is essential to combatting the poverty that afflicts nations worldwide.[40] Recalling our discussion of the social nature of the human good in the previous chapter, here too can be seen the importance of effective and authentic social structures in achieving the human good.

Despite the increasing efforts of the Church and of Catholic writers to be more attentive to issues of environmental ethics, there are those who believe there is much left to do, which includes, but is not restricted to, clarifying and expanding upon official Church doctrines. The Church's ambiguity is highlighted in a telling comment by Bishop Múnera. Liberation theologian Múnera points out that there are a lot of popular misconceptions and little-known truths about the Catholic Church's moral teachings. In this respect, he urges the Church to make a greater effort to be clear. Regardless of what may or may not actually exist in Church doctrine, if Catholics and non-Catholics alike misunderstand the Church's stance, there is little hope that differences can be reconciled. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Catholic environmental ethics is still developing and in many cases is playing catch-up rather than being cutting-edge. Effective communication is essential to dispelling inaccurate assumptions and to promulgating obscure but potentially useful doctrine.[41] Múnera also says that "[r]ecent

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[39] Múnera, "New Theology on Population, Ecology, and Overconsumption from the Catholic Perspective," 67.

[40] Ibid., 69

[41] An example used by Múnera is that of probabilism, a system developed by the Church to combat "undue dogmatism" which teaches that "where there is doubt there is freedom." This is supposedly used in situations "where good people with good reasons disagree" as a way to sort out moral matters. For a more detailed description, see Múnera 70-71. The point here is that Múnera says this is a little-known but

popes have shown a great interest in the moral implications of the ecological situation of the world and in consumerism. As with probabilism, much of this is unknown to many people."[42] If it is unknown to many, this implies that there is probably more the Church could do to clarify and communicate its position for its followers.

In addition to clarifying present positions, some scholars suggest adding more to the agenda. With social justice at the core of Catholicism, Hinze suggests that the credibility and adequacy of Catholic social ethics would be "seriously undermined" were it not to take into account ecological questions.[43] For such thinkers the human ecology of social relationships is inseparable from the physical ecology of the rest of the natural world. The sociological study by Shibley and Wiggins, cited earlier and which examines the American interfaith National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), voices reservations about the effectiveness of current religious approaches such as through the stewardship ethic, noting that endorsing merely stewardship "may work to confine religious environmentalism to conventional environmental issues." The outcome of limiting the ethic to stewardship is potentially two-sided, the authors say. On the one hand, organized Christian religion may emerge as a strong moral authority on issues of preservation and conservation. On the other hand, Shibley and Wiggins claim that with few exceptions in the form of more liberal or "maverick" congregations, there is little evidence that churches will be on the cutting-edge of successfully combining environmental issues with social justice. The lukewarm result is that "[m]ost churches

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potentially useful Church doctrine, especially in cases "where authoritarian approaches marked by an unecumenical and unwarranted dogmatism cause unnecessary tensions."

[42] Ibid., 71.

[43] Hinze, "Catholic Social Teaching and Ecological Ethics," 180.

and synagogues may end up following, or resisting, rather than leading the emergent environmental justice movement in the United States."[44]

This brief survey of Catholic attitudes towards environmental ethics highlights the perhaps unexpected plurality of views within one faith tradition. The diversity would benefit from the identification of at least a few invariant structures to ground discussion and establish common foundations. Thus it would be possible to draw from this diversity a truly catholic or universal core upon which to build an emerging ecotheology. That universal core could be built on the invariant structure of knowing. In its own way, Catholicism already affirms the transcendental precepts, be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, in its consideration of environmental attitudes. In its preference for the poor, Catholicism urges attentiveness to injustice. In emphasizing authentic development, Catholicism endorses prudence in decision-making. In its attention to the common good, Catholicism seeks a reasonable balance between individual and community interests. In affirming the stewardship model, Catholicism insists on responsibility towards one's environment. The invariant structure already exists according to Lonergan's cognitional theory. Lonergan's notion of conversion would make this affirmation explicit. If Catholicism affirms the necessity of a religious component in environmental ethics, Lonergan's contribution is to suggest how that component relates to our moral and intellectual capacities. Further, religious and moral pronouncements must be based on foundations of fact and good science; implicit in Lonergan's generalized empirical method is his insistence on good science.

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[44] Shibley and Wiggins, "The Greening of Mainline American Religion," 346.

It is here that it would be useful to reflect on the thought of ecotheologian Thomas Berry, who is noted for his melding of ecology and theology in his book, *The Dream of the Earth*. According to Ann Marie Dalton, Berry identified three common approaches to issues of environmental ethics. These he termed the confrontational approach, the transformational approach, and the creative approach. Organizations such as the secular Greenpeace and Earth-first movements, known for their often highly-charged activist demonstrations, would be considered confrontational. A transformational approach would refer to those working for change within existing political and social structures. The efforts of much of mainstream Catholicism, such as the Vatican and various episcopal conferences with their emphasis on stewardship, would seem to fit this category. It is the third category which Berry saw as the most potentially fruitful: the creative approach looks beyond the status quo, such as the bioregionalism movement which seeks to define boundaries not in terms of political or man-made boundaries of farms, cities, provinces, and countries, but rather in terms of natural borders such as deserts, marshes, valleys, and mountains.[45] It is the component of creation and innovation which seems to attract Berry, and Lonergan as well. From this perspective, confrontation and transformation will only advance one's cause so far; real progress is rooted in creativity, in the righting of wrongs and healing through love advocated in Lonergan's notion of conversion.

[45] Dalton, 99.

3. Conversion and Catholic Environmental Ethics

Conversion can only be creative and healing when it is authentic. As stated previously in Chapters Two and Three, an essential component of authentic conversion is consonance between knowing and doing. When action does not reflect knowledge, it leads to the situation Múnera sees to exist today:

> I believe that one of the most serious problems in the Catholic world today is the incoherence of Catholics in their moral behavior. They may know the helpful and inspiring doctrines... but the moral practice of most believers is based on different structures that are the product of the specific cultures and circumstances of the different moments of history. In consequence, many Catholics follow in their moral practice the religion of the market and not the religion of Jesus....[46]

Múnera's stance sees much of the world's economic practices, particularly the capitalistic values which pervade much of the West, as being contradictory to both the best interests of the environment and the social justice values attributed to Catholicism.

Although there is much to debate in Múnera's interpretation of economics and politics, for the purposes of this thesis it is sufficient to note his emphasis on the difference between knowing and doing. As in Lonergan's notion of conversion, it is not enough to know, but to act, and to act authentically in accordance with what one knows. So it is that the United States Catholic Bishops came to identify the virtue of prudence as a guiding principle in all ethical decisions. They define prudence to be intelligence applied to action, particularly that which allows us to discern the common good in any given situation.[47] They also acknowledge the component of freedom in any action,

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[46] Múnera, "New Theology on Population, Ecology, and Overconsumption from the Catholic Perspective," 74.

[47] USCCB, www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.htm. Accessed September 16, 2001.

freedom which allows us either to do the right thing or to miss the mark, that is, to sin: "Freedom and the capacity for moral decision making are central to what it means to be human."[48] If freedom and intelligence are defining factors in humanity, they are also essential to conversion.

From our earlier discussion of conversion we know that Lonergan saw freedom to be exercised only in the context of relationships; no one is completely autonomous.[49] According to some thinkers, it is the West's emphasis on the individual which complicates the collective decision-making process, especially on issues of the environment. McFague says that "it is this sense of the individual in community that we have lost. Our assumptions about human life, its rights and responsibilities, no longer begin with a strong sense of solidarity toward others...It is neither the covenant nor the republic that is primary, but the right of the individual to financial and personal fulfillment."[50] While a strong sense of individuality has led to much progress in terms of protecting and valuing individual rights and freedoms, some fear that the scales have tipped too far to the detriment of the common good. If religions such as Christianity were meant to be primarily a binding together of a community, McFague says we have lost some of that cohesion: "The view of human life shared by religion, politics, and economics—the sinful, but free individual—has lost what religion and politics once provided for it: a powerful sense of community with responsibility for others."[51]

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[48] Ibid.
[49] See chapter two of this thesis, 20-24, and chapter three, 14.
[50] McFague, 82.
[51] Ibid., 83.

Lonergan's notion of conversion takes into account the human predisposition for community relationships.

Reminiscent of his insistence on self-discovery, while Lonergan speaks of conversion with an eye to promoting collective responsibility, even this he leaves up to the reader to judge, saying only, "[i]t remains that if collective responsibility is not yet an established fact, it may be a possibility. Further, it may be a possibility that we can realize. Finally, it may be a possibility that it is desirable to realize."[52] Obviously Lonergan hopes we conclude that collective responsibility is essential to authenticity, that in being authentic to ourselves we will be oriented to collective responsibility, but his point is to engage his readers in self-discovery, to suggest and orient, but not to dictate. This self-appropriation, starting from the common ground in his cognitional theory, is meant to lead beyond the self to the importance of community. In Lonergan's understanding, a community "is a matter of a common field of experience, a common mode of understanding, a common measure of judgment, and a common consent," not just, as Marsh points out, a population of people living within a certain geography.[53] According to Lonergan, without this sense of common meaning, people lose touch, which leads to misunderstanding, distrust, suspicion, fear, hostility, and factions.[54] Having different meanings often means having opposed meanings and conflicting goals. A community needs a certain measure of cohesion to survive. Granted, extreme cohesion may then lead to group bias, but Lonergan believes that a need for, and sense of,

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[52] Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 169.
[53] Ibid.,170; Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality," 230.
[54] Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 171.

community is part of what makes us human. It is also community which propagates conversion on a larger scale:

> Though conversion is intensely personal, utterly intimate, still it is not so private as to be solitary. It can happen to many and they can form a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation, and to help one another in working out the implications, and in fulfilling the promise of their new life. Finally, what can become communal can become historical. It can pass from generation to generation. It can spread from one cultural milieu to another. It can adapt to changing circumstance, confront new situations, survive into a different age; flourish in another period or epoch.[55]

The necessity of collective responsibility and the degree to which it exists may be open to debate, but the fact remains of the impact our ongoing collective activity has on the environment. Leduc points out that collectively we have not even reached the first of Lonergan's transcendental precepts, "be attentive." Environmentalists regularly bemoan the fact that we simply are not attentive to our vast and powerful impact on the earth. Carmody makes a claim to the effect that we are not intellectually converted, in his pronouncement that "the ecological crisis comes down to simple blindness: we do not see how the world really works. Especially in the industrially advanced nations, we are living in blatant contradiction to the way the world really works, ignoring the basic laws of matter and energy."[56] Thus prudence, as affirmed by the USCCB, must be applied to collective decisions. Part of this intelligence applied to action means, as Leduc suggests, that in terms of human activity, "we need to shift away from deciding what we ought to do to deciding what we ought to stop doing."[57]

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[55] Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," 13-14.
[56] Carmody, 12.
[57] Leduc, "Theology and Ecology: A Lonerganian Approach," 73.

In the concern for the environment, it is the call for conversion which echoes from all quadrants, regardless of doctrines or theologies. It comes from the Vatican and the bishops conferences, from writers on liberation theology, feminist theology, creation spirituality, the sacramental tradition, and lay scholars. It also comes from outside the tradition where secular ecologists regularly call for fundamental and widespread change in people's attitudes and habits. For example, the notion of conversion even appears in a collection of essays relating geoscience to environmental issues, where contributor E-an Zen writes of the prevailing need in affluent society to change our lifestyle in the face of the following facts: that earth has natural limits, that "we are fooling ourselves if we think we are above these limits," that technological solutions are not a cure-all, that "fundamental human change, i.e., conversion is the only true solution" and that "the call for change in the sense of conversion is the stuff of religion."[58] The call to conversion applies not only to personal values and outlooks but also to economies, governments, social policies, laws, and patterns of production, distribution and consumption.[59] Conversion, though never a sure bet due to the inherent fallibility of human beings is, according to Maura Ryan, "to be willing to stop taking risks *with* our global future, and to take risks *for* our global future."[60] To this effect, Lonergan's thought is applicable to environmental ethics, in his desire to reveal what is unintelligent and inauthentic about human activity and to promote what is intelligent and authentic.[61] It takes conversion and

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[58] E-an Zen, "Stakes, Options, and Some Natural Limits to a Sustainable World," in *The Earth Around Us: Maintaining a Livable Planet*, ed. Jill S. Schneiderman (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 2000), 389.
[59] Ryan, 6.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Leduc, "Theology and Ecology: A Lonerganian Approach," 69.

self-transcendence to be able to sort out the differences. Although some believe that Lonergan overestimates our ability to discern whether we are succeeding or failing in our attempts at self-transcendence, it is acknowledged that the attempt must be made and that Lonergan's thought provides a viable framework.[62]

The relevance of Lonergan's contribution lies in its generality. His cognitional theory, method of self-appropriation, and notion of conversion provide an overarching structure for change that is transcultural; because of the generality of his method, it allows the generation of specific solutions for specific cultures. It puts the responsibility to change on the individual, in that we all have the potential for self-transcendence, yet also upon the community, in that we are by nature social creatures whose collective activity bears impacts nothing but a collective responsibility has the power to change. We all know we have to change, but Lonergan clarifies the scale of that change, breaks it down into its components, and suggests that we have more in common than some would have us think. Now we can be aware of what those changes are, how they might occur, and why they need to occur. His description and explanation of conversion, steeped in a scientific mindset of verifying the hypothesis in the data, helps us better understand the workings of conversion and its importance in matters that are not strictly theological. As Leduc notes, "Lonergan's work is dedicated to breaking a self-perpetuating cycle of decline. Ecological destruction is a contemporary manifestation of such a cycle. Lonergan's work, while philosophical, is oriented to the practical, and out of this

[62] Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity," 352.

pragmatic orientation arises his challenge to theology."[63] The practical side of Lonergan's notion of conversion arises in its demands for consistency between knowledge/belief and action, which is the stuff of ethics. By emphasizing three types of conversion Lonergan shows that it is not enough either to make religious claims without knowledge of how the world works, as revealed by the rigours of the scientific method, or to make scientific claims the norms for morals and ethics without a means to probe questions of ultimate meaning as provided by a religious orientation. Just as knowledge, values, and love are incomplete without each other in terms of authentic conversion, so too will authentic progress in environmental ethics be a matter of collaboration between the secular worlds of science, technology, politics, economics, law, and education, and the religious sphere of discerning ultimate meaning.

4. Some Conclusions

Most any environmental ethics, secular or religious, calls for change in the way we understand the world, in what we expect of it, and in how we operate in it. The need for development is a common starting point. Lonergan's notion of conversion is a formulation for what authentic human development is and how it may be achieved. His

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[63] Leduc, "Theology and Ecology: A Lonerganian Approach," 74. Leduc's statement needs some clarifying. While Lonergan's work is ultimately oriented toward practicality, it is often said that it is a withdrawal from practicality for the sake of practicality. The "detached intelligence" which Lonergan seeks to preserve in his writing may seem to some to be so detached and abstract as to be irrelevant. However, he insists that catering incessantly to practicality has its own pitfalls which include a sacrifice of authenticity. To step back from practicality once in a while allows one to recognize when it really is appropriate. Lonergan cannot be said to be a pragmatist (which he understood as a capitulation to practicality and so a way to maintain general bias), although his thought does have practical results. See Insight, 255ff. One such practical result is his model for functional specialties, originally intended as a method for theological collaboration between academics but which scholars have now begun to apply to

notion of intellectual conversion is based on the three-fold structure of knowing (embodied in experience, understanding, and judgment) which he claims is invariant among human beings. If this claim is to be accepted, then his method of self-appropriation aimed at intellectual conversion may be considered further common ground. Built upon this three-fold structure of knowing is the four-fold structure of decision-making (embodied in experience, understanding, judgment, and deliberation). Lonergan's notion of moral conversion, of choosing value over satisfaction where the two conflict, relies on this formula for decision-making. Lonergan claims that this formula, too, is invariant among human beings. Although the process is muddied by biases and the general human propensity to sin, that is, to miss the mark, Lonergan believes his transcendental method along with its norms (be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible) can serve as signposts in our thinking and doing. That Lonergan is capable of explaining intellectual and moral conversion without explicit reference to religion should at least make him worthy of interest and consideration even to those who do not share his religious beliefs. Lonergan does draw the Christian God into the equation with respect to religious conversion, but insists that equivalent notions of unrestricted love exist outside the Christian tradition, making his philosophy accessible to those outside the tradition as well.[64]

Yet there is much to be done just from within the Catholic tradition. Because of the range of viewpoints which arise in a Catholic discussion of environmental ethics, it is

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other disciplines. Functional specialization arises from his work on transcendental method and uses Lonergan's cognitional theory as its foundation.

[64] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 283.

hoped that introducing Lonergan's thought may provide a normative basis for sorting out differences and highlighting common ground. According to Barnes, any authentic theological or religious reflection on the environment will support "honest and full analyses, difficult decisions, and enduring effort."[65] It will be a cooperative effort, particularly between science and religion. Science is equipped to probe into the effect and extent of environmental degradation, while religion is equipped to address the meaning behind it.[66] Although politics and economics have an important stake in environmental issues, the scope of this thesis is simply to suggest that religion also has a stake and a relevant contribution. Christiansen and Grazer add that:

> Religious communities are particularly well suited to engage the issue of the environment. They have theological and teaching resources, geographically and culturally diverse communities, and most importantly, the moral authority needed to address major issues by virtue of their very mission. Creating a sense of the sacred is fundamental to an ethic of respect and care for God's creation, and it is the distinctive mission of the religious community to develop such an ethic.[67]

This may be said especially of Catholicism, which spans countries, crosses cultures, includes significant populations, and possesses a lengthy history.[68] According to Christiansen and Grazer, a specifically Catholic approach will insist that environmental issues rest on a theological foundation, where environmental concerns will be explored in terms of Scripture, worship, spirituality, and moral norms.[69] Catholicism is further notable in its social ethics which highlights an ethics of restraint and responsibility,

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[65] Barnes, 7.
[66] Christiansen and Grazer, 2.
[67] Ibid., 5.
[68] French, "Contesting Energies," 127.
[69] Christiansen and Grazer, 6.

stewardship, and the common good.[70] As far as Catholicism is concerned, it may be a latecomer to the dialogue, especially considering its formidable presence in other moral matters throughout history, but the "better-late-than-never" adage stands. Catholic environmental ethics stands to learn a lot from the progress already made by other religious and secular environmental efforts. It also has much to contribute based on the principles and doctrines already outlined in this thesis. Finally, although in life Lonergan did not express explicit interest in environmental issues, the legacy of thought he leaves in his cognitional theory, method of self-appropriation, and notions of self-transcendence and conversion, offers much potential for discussion both in the religious and secular realms of environmental ethics.

Lonergan's cognitional theory serves as the foundation for his life's work and thought. It is at the heart of his notion of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, and the call for change embraced in conversion is a crux in any discussion of environmental ethics. Perhaps if we dwell a little more on acquiring mastery in our own house, that is, on discovering our own self-transcendence proper to the human process of coming to know,[71] then we will have a greater chance of mastering the "house knowledge" proper to the spirit of ecology. Perhaps it is the combination of proper knowing and proper doing that will ground the realization that through conversion we may transform this "house knowledge" into the proper love of home.

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[70] Ryan, 11; See also Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Theological Resources for Earth-Healing: Covenant and Sacrament," 60.
[71] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 239.

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