

Form

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If, cognitively (and paradoxically), what exists as a potency can also exist as an act which is orientated toward a conscious reception of other acts (one act subsuming another or building on another) and if, metaphysically, potency exists as something which can receive a determination from without (from something that is other than itself) which then converts what exists as a potency into something that is now partially lacking in potency (lacking a certain degree or a certain kind of potency), then, in form, in the active principle of form (form as distinct from potency), we have a principle of determination which explains how or why it is possible to speak about different kinds of potency and different kinds of act (different kinds of realization) which can transform a potency into something that is partially in potency or wholly lacking in potency. Different kinds of potency and different kinds of act or realization both mutually imply the existence of different types of form.¹ In form, a principle of discrimination exists: a principle of differentiation which also functions as a principle of limitation when we think about how a potency is always being modified whenever, from without, it receives some kind of form in a first development or a first realization which moves from potency to form (a development or realization which can also be viewed as a distinct species of transition which, in its own way, moves from potency to act where, in this context, an act is to be identified with the presence of a form).

On the relation which thus specifically exists between potency and form: on the one hand, as noted, without the reception of some kind of form, a potency would exist in a wholly indeterminate manner and, in such a situation, a potency would exist in an unrestricted way as a pure potency or as prime potency. In itself thus, in the absence of any kind of determination, a potency cannot be said to be intelligible to itself (it is not constituted by the presence of any kind of intelligibility which refers to the presence of a form).² But, with the reception of some kind of form which introduces or brings an ordering of meaning or an intelligibility into a potency, an intelligible principle (having an intelligible structure or existing as an intelligible structure)³ enters into a potency. It joins itself to the “what can be of potency” to impart a determination to potency: as we have already noted, to effect a differentiation within potency in a manner that lessens the potency of a given potency, removing an initial or prior potency which exists within a given potency (or, in this way, lessening a potency's degree of indeterminacy). Hence, for this reason, when form imparts to potency a degree of determinacy which exists as a specification of meaning or as specification of an intelligibility, it can be properly said that form exists or functions as a species of act which is known by us as a “first act.”⁴ This first act exists as a first actuation or first cause. In form (in contrast to potency), we move toward a degree of realization although, for the full realization or transformation of any potency, more realizations will be needed:

¹Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 39: “form is the reason why a given subject is in fact an appropriate potency for a particular second act.”

²Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 40.

³As Aquinas argues, form exists as an “intelligible structure.” Cf. *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 8, 1, 1687.

⁴Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 459, n. 1; Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 38. Form, as first act, is to be distinguished from act or operation, as second act, which can only be fully discussed when the meaning of judgment is fully explored as a second operation of the mind which succeeds the understanding which belongs to first operations that ask “what” and “why” questions.

more than what is given or what can be given through the reception of a form and the meaning which exists in a form and which is to be correlated with what is meant when we speak about the presence of an intelligibility.⁵ We move toward reality through experiences and receptions of intelligibility.⁶ But, on the other hand, experiences of intelligibility are not to be immediately or simply correlated with experiences of truth. We understand this difference when we recall the kinds of questions that had been asked by Socrates when, in his day, in the market place of Athens, he would go about asking persons for answers. What is the meaning of courage or what is the meaning of justice? Different responses would be given and, in hearing the answers that were given, the different answers which were given were all understood. But, when Socrates would ask additional questions, no one meaning could be regarded as an entirely adequate meaning. Intelligibility cannot be equated with realizations of potency that are complete or total. With form, with intelligibility, we only move toward the non-existence of potencies.

In form then, we are given or we experience an initial degree of realization. We encounter an intelligibility that differs from other meanings or other intelligibilities which can possibly exist but which are perhaps not being understood in a given context or which are perhaps not being applied in a given context in any thinking or understanding that we do or have about something which we have been sensing. When something is only being sensed, it is not known or understood in terms of how it exists in an internal way when we want to speak about why something exists or about what it is apart from other things that we can initially know about through other acts of sense which we can have of

⁵Please note that, for purposes of clarity and greater exactness, it is said that forms are known through meanings which exist as terms or as contents of our direct acts of understanding (although, in a more abbreviated way of speaking, we can properly speak about forms in a way which similarly refers to them as terms or as the contents of our direct acts of understanding). If meaning, on the one hand, refers to a cognitional experience (it exists as a datum of our intellectual consciousness), form, on the other hand, refers to a metaphysical principle. From meaning as a cognitional principle, we move to form as a metaphysical principle. Form is what is known or what can be known through a meaning that has been grasped by a prior direct act of understanding. In this way of speaking however, it is not to be assumed or concluded that alternative ways of speaking are to be viewed as inappropriate. Differences in conceptuality do not necessarily imply that we can legitimately speak about differences which are present in meaning.

⁶See Hugo A. Meynell, "How Right Plato Was," *Loneragan Workshop*, vol. 8, ed. Fred Lawrence (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 149-163; *Redirecting Philosophy: Reflections on the Nature of Knowledge from Plato to Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 241-251. To Plato belongs the credit for first discovering the distinct kind of reality which exists when we refer to forms and the meaning of forms. Forms refer to a reality which sharply differs from the kind of reality that is known by us when we attend to what is given to us in our several acts of sense and what is thus known by us if we attend to what is given to us in our data of sense. While Aristotle argues that a different kind of relation exists between matter and form than how Plato thinks about this same relation, he would not disagree with Plato's claim that forms refer to a reality which is not akin or like the kind of reality which is known by us when we attend to our acts and data of sense. To Plato belongs an all important discovery which argues that the real is real because it is intelligible ("the real is intelligible"). Cf. Meynell, *Redirecting Philosophy*, p. 252.

these other things.⁷ The form of a thing (or, analogously speaking, the form of a body)⁸ points to what something is in terms of its rational identity, its intelligibility, its meaning, or its nature and, indirectly, it points to what it is not in terms of its rational identity, its intelligibility, its meaning, or its nature. Hence, we say about every form that every form is intelligible in itself.⁹ To a certain extent, every form (by its meaning) perfects or realizes a given potency, although, through a species of realization which does not say that a given nature or meaning truly exists with respect to some object or thing which we are trying to understand; or that a given nature or meaning truly explains why a certain object or thing performs a given act or operation and why it does not perform some other kind of act or operation. In other words, cognitively, while potency refers to what is first simply given to us in our sensible experience, form refers to what is first given to us within an act of direct understanding. In a form but, through an idea or meaning, we discover an intelligibility or now know about the presence of an intelligibility (an intelligibility which constitutes or which refers to the presence of some kind of inner nature, an inner law, or an inner principle) which seems to exist or to properly apply within a given set of material conditions.¹⁰ An intelligibility which exists as a formal cause can explain why a given event

⁷Recall what Aquinas says in various texts when he speaks about understanding (*intelligere*) as an act which is derived from *intus legere* (literally: to read inwardly). Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 304, n. 22. Stebbins explicitly refers to Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a-2ae, q. 8, a. 1 and ad 3.

⁸In this context, please note that the form of a body is not to be confused with the sensible form which all bodies have when we advert to the shape or to the contours of a body that are directly known by us through our various acts of sense. The sensible form of body which exists in an exterior way is to be sharply distinguished from a form that exists within a body which can never be known through an act of sense (but which can only be known through a direct act of understanding). Cf. Byrne, "Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form," pp. 375-376; "Insight and the Retrieval of Nature," p. 12. By attending to a soul that exists within a body or a thing (even if this soul cannot be seen or sensed in any way), by asking questions about this form and by receiving any acts of understanding that we can have about this form, in this context, we can begin to understand why a given body or a thing with a body happens to have the sensible form or body which it happens to have. From an intelligible form (an intellectually understood form), we can begin to understand sensible forms, exterior configurations and shapes (even as we know that these kinds of form are first known by us through our acts of sense and not by our later acts of direct understanding).

⁹Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 40.

¹⁰For further understanding about why we must specifically speak about direct acts of understanding and not about some other kind of understanding, look at what Lonergan says about the difference which exists between direct insight and inverse insight in his *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 43-44. A direct insight, a direct act of understanding, grasps an intelligibility that allegedly exists within an experienced, given set of data. An inverse insight, as also an act of understanding, realizes that no intelligibility exists within a given set of data. If some kind of intelligibility is to be sought and attained within a given set of data, we should change our anticipations about the kind of meaning or the kind of intelligibility which we are looking for. We should change the kinds of questions that we are asking and we should attend to other instances of data and not to those instances of data which have been eliciting our attention. If, for instance, we want to understand the nature of motion as this occurs with respect to moving bodies (moving objects), instead of trying to look for a nature that can explain why bodies or objects move at a constant speed, we should attend to why changes of motion occur when bodies or object undergo either a deceleration in speed or an acceleration in speed. Once we realize that, in our physical world, everything exists in a state of motion (instead of rest, it is motion which exists as a basic given), motion as motion ceases to become

occurs, or why a given body has a certain set of characteristics which distinguish it from other bodies, or why, in a given situation, we best speak about the unity of a thing and not about the unity of a body.¹¹ If, in general, we adequately understand the form of any given thing, we should also understand why a given thing exists in the way that it does (having the proximate unity which it seems to have) and why it also behaves in the way that it does (engaging in certain kinds of acts or operations and not engaging in other kinds of acts or operations).¹² Different kinds of form can be distinguished from each other on the basis of the kind of unity that is being sought by a potential knower through questions that are yearning for understanding (experiences of direct understanding). Some forms explain the existence of things while others explain the why of activities or events.

a legitimate object of inquiry. We grow in understanding if, instead, we can turn to changes in speed or motion and if we can seek to understand why changes of speed or motion occur. An inverse insight encourages us to move into a new kind of inquiry that can turn toward a different set of data and a different set of questions and, through new acts of inquiring and reasoning, we can hopefully move toward the possible reception of new acts of direct understanding. Our acts of direct understanding are facilitated by prior, inverse acts of understanding.

¹¹In his *Physics*, Aristotle had spoken about four necessary causes or reasons: a material cause (“that from which as a constituent” or “that *by which* something is made”), a final cause (“that for the sake of which” or “that *for the sake of* which something is made”), an efficient, instrumental, or active cause (“that from which change or rest first begins” or that *by which* something is made”), and, lastly, a formal cause (“that which one knows about something insofar as one has formulated its explanatory definition” or, in a way which does not refer to an act of human cognition, “that *into which* something is made”). Cf. Patrick H. Byrne, “Teleology, Modern Science and Verification,” *Loneragan Workshop: The Legacy of Lonergan*, vol. 10, ed. Fred Lawrence (1994): 3-4; Adler, *Aristotle for Everybody*, p. 42.

With respect to a formal cause, a formal cause specifies what something is (*quod quid est*). Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, 2, 3, 194b27-29. With Byrne on Aristotle's understanding of formal cause, we can say that a formal cause explains the “recurrent motions” which appear to belong to the life or the activity of a given thing. Cf. Byrne, “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” p. 15. A formal cause appears to answer “why” or “what” questions without there being any need to speak about other kinds of causes. In the traditional language which, at times, Lonergan uses, a formal cause is that which converts matter into a thing, giving it a certain identity that is derived from how an intelligible nature (existing as a form) is united to matter (existing as common matter), the combination constituting an essence which, with act, is constitutive of a thing in terms of its real or actual existence. Cf. *Verbum*, p. 24, as cited by Byrne, “Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” p. 383. Form should not be confused with essence. If we want to understand what something is, we want to know about an essence although, at the same time, it is to be admitted that no essence can be known unless we first know about a form, the meaning of a form (if we are in the presence of the meaning of a form). On the basis of forms, we know about essences. Form exists as a constituent of essence.

¹²In his *Posterior Analytics*, 2, 2, 90a31, Aristotle had noted that “to know what it is (*ti esti*) [what is an X?] is the same as to know why it is (*dià ti*) [why X is Y?].” Cf. Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 26. Aquinas reiterates this thesis in the *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 7, 17, 1651; 1667 where he argues that “what” and “why” questions “basically coincide.” In both cases, the desired object is some sort of explanation or understanding which can identify why something exists in the way that it happens to exist or why it has certain characteristics in the way that it has its characteristics. Cf. *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 7, 17, 1650. The object is a constitutive principle which is not obvious to any act of

For a simple initial example which can perhaps reveal more fully what is to be understood when we think about the meaning of form, compare the beak and talons of a hawk with those of a sparrow. Each creature exists as a bird but each possesses differences which elicit questions which ask for some kind of rational explanation. Why is this this and why is this that? An explanation emerges as a datum of our intellectual consciousness even as we admit that, by way of supposition and hypothesis, differing explanations can be grasped and proposed for why given events occur or why this body or this thing has characteristics which differ from the characteristics which belong to this other body or this other thing. It is no easy step to move from an experience of differences which exist at a sensible level to a direct experience of understanding which reduces a sensed experience of plurality and difference to an experience of oneness and cohesion that is given through the apprehension of a meaning, the *ratio*, or the reason of an intelligibility which exists within a form which exists as the term of a direct act of understanding. Our acts of understanding grasp that an unseen, understood inner relation can be postulated among a number of different elements or variables which, like the relation, are not themselves seen but which are known (they are understood) through the relations which are grasped by us in our direct acts of understanding. When a relation which is thus first known through our understanding is then transposed into the outer words of language and speech which we can construct by moving from internal to external conditions, its specification then serves as a point of departure for later acts of inquiry which could come to know about an internally ordered intelligible set of elements which exists within a given nature or form (a form or nature which is allegedly constitutive of things as things truly and properly exist and which we can speak about in a way which points to the possible presence of an explanatory scientific law which before had not been known but which is now known by us in an initial way because it has been understood: it has been grasped by an act of direct understanding).

Hence, by way of a summary that we can make, with respect to forms, we say that a form is known by understanding things in terms of how they relate to each other and only in terms of how different things relate to one another.¹³ The things which are related can refer to internal intelligible variables and a

sense but which has to be discovered through inquiry and the reasoning which is caused by our asking of questions.

In the kind of language which we apparently find in Aristotle, we move from the experience of a “mere fact” that we immediately know or sense to the experience of a “reasoned fact” that we have yet to know. We move from what exists for us initially as an unquestionable datum (a truth or fact that we undoubtedly know) to what can be known through questions which can possibly lead us toward a direct act of understanding. Cf. Byrne, *Analysis and Science in Aristotle*, p. 1. Our questioning moves us from things which exist first in regard to ourselves (*prius quoad nos*) or as they exist in relation to ourselves (who we are as human beings and what we are doing as human beings) and then, from there, by our questions, we move toward things which exist first in regard to themselves (*prius quoad se*) or, in other words, how they exist with respect to each other or how, in fact, they relate to each other. We move from an order of causes that is present within the order of our human cognition toward an order of causes that is present within the order of being or the order of reality. The latter kind of order and causes refer to the order of the known as this exists within the context of a critical metaphysics.

13As Lonergan speaks about form in *Insight*, p. 457, in a way which also distinguishes it from other meanings which it should not have:

'Form' denotes the component of proportionate being to be known, not

relation which exists between them which explains why a given event occurs, or why a given thing acts as it does, or why it is acted upon in the manner that it is acted upon. Or, on the other hand and in addition, the object of our understanding could be something which exists as a distinct unity: a thing which exists as the subject of a set of actions which are proper to it and which also exists as a recipient of actions which are proper to it. Relations which are understood can refer to relations which exist between things or they can refer to relations which exist within things.¹⁴ As we have previously noted, the kind of unity which is being sought by a given direct act of understanding can differ from other kinds of unity which we seek through other possible direct acts of understanding.

Form and Cognitive Consciousness

Turning now more fully to the transitions which occur within our human cognition through shifts that variously move, in metaphysics, from one species of potency to another species of potency (later species of potency existing as specifications of act), oddly enough, while our acts of sense function as an initial point of departure in our acts of human cognition, inner experiences of curiosity and the asking of questions function more immediately as a proximate point of departure where the object, through form, is the kind of knowledge which we have and which exists for us in philosophy and science.¹⁵ In responding to experiences of particularity that are presented to us by our acts of sense, questions naturally, properly, and spontaneously arise within the data of our intellectual human consciousness.¹⁶ Our questions are elicited and we experience the presence of our questions within our questioning because problems need to be solved and puzzles resolved and, with the emergence of our questions, a discerning intellectual attitude begins to arise within ourselves (an attitude which marks us off as persons because, as subjects, it can be said that we exist as persons).¹⁷ The “within” refers to our

by understanding the names of things, nor by understanding their relations to us, but by understanding them fully in their relations to one another.

¹⁴Byrne, “Loneran's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” p. 378.

¹⁵Aquinas, *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 1, 3, 55. In science, through the apprehension of one or more intelligible forms, we understand what we first have known through our prior acts of sense.

¹⁶*Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 1, 1, 2-4. When Aquinas comments on Aristotle's claim that “all men naturally desire to know” (the opening lines of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 980a21-24), he gives three reasons to explain why this is so: (1) if the human intellect is to achieve the end or purpose for which it was created, it must try to engage in acts of reasoning which allow for the possible reception of acts of understanding; (2) since it is proper for human beings to understand, it is right and proper for human beings to seek understanding as if it were a proper and legitimate goal; (3) since human understanding has origins which must derive from some kind of understanding which is already given or which already exists (the prior understanding functions as a primary cause of understanding), it is right and meet that human understanding should try to move toward this originating understanding in order to be fully united to it. Something which exists a lower level of reality or being cannot cause something which exists at a higher level of reality or being.

¹⁷Our freedom and our ability to take responsibility for how we live and behave is grounded in our ability to ask questions and move toward apprehensions of meaning which indicate possible courses of action that we can take up and implement. Please recall here a traditional definition about what it means to exist as a person: according to Boethius, a person is “an individual substance of rational nature.” Cf. Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, p. 153, n. 16;

experience of self which, in turn, refers to the presence of our subjectivity and the condition or state of this subjectivity as this exists at any given time. Without some kind of awareness as this exists within an implicit consciousness of self which we all have as human beings, it would not be possible for us to have an awareness or an experience of anything. As one state or condition of consciousness is succeeded by another state or condition of consciousness (or, in other words, as our consciousness becomes more conscious or as our consciousness expands in consciousness), our consciousness is reshaped and retooled. As potential knowers, we begin to sense that an incompleteness lies within the depths of our cognitive consciousness (an incompleteness which knows that something is not being fully known or fully understood; something is not being understood as best or as well as it can or should be understood). There is more to life and the world than what literally meets our eyes (what our senses can know and what they seem to tell us).

Hence, as our questions emerge, a power of inquiry reveals itself from within ourselves: a power of inquiry which wants to move from experiences of potency toward experiences that transcend an awareness of potency and the kind of awareness which is only be known by us through our acts of sense. In the conceptuality which we find in the language of Aquinas, an inner interior light, an intellectual kind of light is internally operative. A “lighting” refers to the actuation of our understanding as this occurs within our conscious human cognition whenever an act of understanding is received and is experienced by us as a release from pressures that have been caused by our desires for some kind of growth or increment in our experience of understanding.¹⁸ The senses give us an immediate and, yet, only a potential knowledge of things. This knowledge obviously refers to what is directly known by us within the contents of a given datum of sense. However, as we also consciously know or as, in a way, we consciously sense, our senses do not clearly indicate how any elements or parts are ordered to each other within the data of our experience.¹⁹ Our initial knowledge of things is confused and undifferentiated. What is known is lacking in distinction, clarity, order, and definition. An effect is not being clearly distinguished from a cause (an effect, from its explanation).²⁰ One kind of difference is not being clearly distinguished from the existence of other kinds of difference (we refer to verbal, conceptual, and actual differences). False appearances are not distinguished from true

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11726a.htm>, October 30, 2012. In Aquinas, this definition is modified to say that a human person, as embodied, is to be regarded as an existent or subsistent individual substance who exists in a rational nature [or, in other words, a human person is an existent or subsistent individual thing who is endowed with a rational nature]. Cf. Owens, p. 153, n. 16; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aquinas#Psychology, October 30, 2012.

¹⁸*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 171, a. 2.

¹⁹*De Veritate*, q. 11, a. 1; *Sententia super Physicam*, 1, 1, 7; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 2, a. 1; q. 42, a. 3; q. 85, a. 3. Cf. Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, pp. 295-296, n. 38.

²⁰Recall that the Greek term *aitia*, *aition* which translates as “cause,” also translates as “explanation” or “reason,” and if we speak about explanations and reasons, we are less likely to fall into a materialistic way of thinking which is more likely to happen if we think in terms of causes rather than explanations and reasons. Because effects are first known by us within the data of our sense experience before we can think about any possible causes which are not simply given to us in any of our acts of sense, causes can only be known if we begin to move away from the acts and data of our senses. Causes can be supposed in our acts of inquiring and reasoning and then they can be possibly discovered by the reception of later acts of understanding in a shift which moves us toward a reality that exists at a further remove from what exists in any of our prior acts of sense.

appearances (appearance from reality).²¹

Hence, on the basis of a natural human desire for knowledge, this same desire, tendency, or appetite (in its functioning) is responsible for a movement which emerges in a completely natural, intelligible, and intelligent way. What is intelligible refers to a meaning which is received as the term of a direct act of understanding although, on the other hand and somewhat differently, intelligence differs from intelligibility because it refers to a self-assembling spiritual species of activity which is proper to human subjects as aspirant, incipient knowers.²² The asking of one question intelligibly and intelligently leads to the asking of other questions in a process or order which reveals a normative structure within the conduct of our human inquiries (a structure which, in one way, is already given to

²¹*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 17, a. 1 & ad 2. Please note for purposes of further clarity that, in his own way, Aquinas clearly distinguishes between the sensible experience of a form and the intellectual experience of a form. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 84, a. 6, ad 2; q. 85, a. 2, ad 3; 2a2ae, q. 173, a. 2. In our hearing of any music, music is received as a patterned reception of sound and this patterning, as heard, refers to the direct experiencing which we have of an audible sensible form, each note of music being ordered to other notes of music in a way that distinguishes an experience of music from an experience of noise (as this is given to us in random experiences of sound). The patterning explains why, in general, pieces of music can be easily remembered, reproduced, and communicated to others (from this person to that other person or group). On the other hand however, but similarly, when we move to the ordering that is found within intellectual experiences of form, something is known through our acts of direct understanding. In acts of direct understanding, unseen elements are also ordered to each other in a patterning which explains why these orders can be easily remembered, reproduced, and thus communicated to others. In the ordering which occurs or which exists through our acts of direct understanding, a kind of harmony makes its presence felt: a harmony that is enjoyed by our understanding and which exists for understanders as a source of joy and satisfaction.

In conjunction with what Aquinas thus says about the meaning of sensible forms, if we want to look at how, in his own way, Lonergan speaks about sensible forms in the context of how he speaks about the nature of human cognition, the best place to begin is with what Lonergan has to say about artistically patterned consciousness (what Lonergan refers to early on as the “aesthetic pattern of experience” when this species of consciousness is discussed in the context of his *Insight*, pp. 207-209). See *Method in Theology*, p. 273, where Lonergan speaks about artistically differentiated consciousness and the pattern of consciousness which belongs to it.

Differing patterns of consciousness can be distinguished from each other on the basis of different conations or different interests which can dominate a person's waking life: different conations or interests which then govern how our acts of sensing, thinking, and understanding are combined with each other at a given time in any given context in order to accomplish a particular goal or do a desired deed. A person, for instance, who devotes his or her time to scientific pursuits develops a pattern of consciousness which is characterized by a desire that discounts or casts aside the influence of other desires and interests. One lives for the sake of understanding and wisdom. One wants to grow in understanding and wisdom. Witness, for example, the consequences of living within this differentiation of consciousness if we attend to how Plutarch speaks about the death of Archimedes which had occurred in 212 BC during the Roman siege of Syracuse:

Archimedes was, as fate would have it, intent upon working out some

us and which, in another way, is not simply given to us since, in any given instance, it has to be actuated by subjective forms of human doing which refer to what happens whenever we speak about the spirit or the actuation of human inquiry as this begins for us with the posing of questions). Certain parts or elements have always to be present in the activities that we do as potential, incipient knowers and these must always refer or relate to each other in a regulative, normative way if our human cognition is to move from any condition or state of potency toward any kind of realization or actualization.

The order of our human knowing accordingly points to the presence of a self-transcending orientation that exists within our human cognition as our human understanding seeks to go beyond itself toward that which has yet to be understood,²³ and within this order of self-transcendence as we examine the kinds of shifts which exist and occur within it, a number of interior orders or, in other words, a number of different interior relations can be specified: interior orders or interior relations which are all ordered or related to each other (one internal relation pointing or leading to another interior relation).²⁴ For a full understanding and knowledge of anything (as we have already noted), one form of potency must be succeeded by another form of potency (which, as act, is lacking in a degree of indeterminacy, a degree

problem by a diagram, and having fixed his mind alike and his eyes upon the subject of his speculation, he never noticed the incursion of the Romans, nor that the city was taken. In this transport of study and contemplation, a soldier, unexpectedly coming up to him, commanded him to follow to Marcellus; which he declining to do before he had worked out his problem to a demonstration, the soldier, enraged, drew his sword and ran him through.

In aesthetically differentiated consciousness, persons give themselves to non-purposive experiences of sensible form which can lead to a re-orientation of our conscious living. We can forget about other things (other concerns) and this forgetfulness and casting aside can act as a liberating influence as new possibilities are revealed to us with respect about how we might attend to new, possible meanings for the sake of living a better life. Where, in the life of our human cognition, apt images can function as material causes to help trigger acts of understanding which can help us solve a problem or find some kind of explanation for things that are not well understood, the apt imagery which we can experience within the arts can also perform a like service. A new world of meaning can become obvious to us or much more obvious than what it had been before.

22As Elizabeth Murray speaks about these matters in “Immortality in Light of Lonergan's Explicit Metaphysics,” pp. 12-13, when distinguishing between matter and spirit (“material reality” versus “spiritual reality”): “it is not as commonly imagined that the body contains a soul, but that the soul contains a body, and self-consciousness contains both soul and body.” What exists in a material way can be understood by acts of intelligence but acts of intelligence cannot be comprehended by anything that exists in a material way. Cf. Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 543.

23Aquinas, *Sentencia Libri De anima*, 3, 15, 821.

24In terms of conceptuality, in the language of Aquinas, we would speak about orders (how things are ordered to each other) while, in the language of Lonergan, we speak about relations (how things are related to each other). In thinking about what these words mean in the context of their usage, we find verbal distinctions or verbal differences. We do not refer to the presence of other differences or other distinctions (although, though differing words, we can speak about a possible presence of conceptual differences or a possible presence of real differences).

of potency) until, finally, we get to a point where, in our understanding and knowledge of something, we are no longer working with presences or experiences of potency. We no longer experience any potency in our acts of human knowing even if other, newer questions can possibly arise at a later date: newer questions which could possibly lead us toward newer acts of understanding and, paradoxically, newer realizations of potency which can specifically exist in light of or as a consequence of our newer acts of understanding. As our understanding grows, we more fully know about the existence of other potencies and how these exist as different species or different kinds of potency which, in some way, are all ordered to each other.

In the shift which thus occurs as our knowing passes through a number of different stages (as our experiencing yields to direct understanding and as our direct understanding yields to reflective acts of understanding),²⁵ if it is possible to say about a first act of direct understanding that it incorporates what is first known in a prior act of sense while, at the same time, through a species of addition, it also transcends or goes beyond what is first known in an act of sense,²⁶ then we can speak about the presence to us of a first internal relation that we experience: an internal relation which joins a form with a potency (or which finds a form within a potency). We can properly speak about a first internal relation if, oddly enough, within a given potency, a given species of receptivity is found to be properly orientated toward the possible reception of a form that is specific to it and which is connatural or proper to it, and if, with Aristotle, Aquinas, and Lonergan, we can speak about how our acts of inquiring and thinking (which lead us toward our acts of understanding) work with apt images and phantasms to apprehend meanings or forms as these come to exist within the data of our conscious intellectual experience.

To indicate more clearly and more exactly why we can properly speak here about a first internal relation, we best attend to what happens in the genesis of an act of direct understanding. Acts of sense interrelate with potential acts of understanding when and as this relation is mediated or as it is encouraged through constructive acts of human imagination which function within demands that are placed upon us by questions which ask about the possible existence of a meaning or a form as a meaning or form which could be present within our experience of sense data. While, on the basis of prior acts of understanding,²⁷ our human knowing begins with acts of sensing (it begins with an initial

²⁵*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 3.

²⁶As our human inquiry begins with wonder and as this same wonder anticipates that something needs to be added to the data of our sense or imagination if our experiences of potency are to be lessened in a given situation, in the wake of first operations of the mind, meaning or form is what is added to the data of our sense and the data of imagination. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 22. And then, later on, in a further specification of self-transcendence, in the wake of reflective operations of the mind, through another addition, truth or reality can be possibly added to data as this exists in a meaning or form which has been grasped in prior, direct acts of understanding. In the analysis which we find in Aquinas, different acts of the mind are distinguished from each another on the basis of different objects which each act intends or desires. Cf. Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata De anima*, a. 13; *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 6, 4, 1236, as cited by Peter Heonen, *Reality and Judgment according to St. Thomas*, trans. Henry F. Tiblier (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 5. As one act of cognition builds on another act of cognition to incorporate what had been known in a previously given act, the object of each new act incorporates what had been known and experienced in a previously apprehended object.

²⁷To understand why, in concrete acts of human understanding and knowing, we properly

experience of potency), our understanding begins to happen when our inquiries take received images or phantasms (gathered from acts of sense) and then freely reconstruct them to reshape or to recast them into a suggestive pattern or into a suggestive arrangement of parts or elements. If an act of sensing is to yield to what can be added to a term or datum of sense by a term or datum that is given to us in an act of direct understanding, the intermediate or instrumental object is a set of apt images since apt images suggest a relation of parts or elements which can only be grasped or understood through the reception of a direct act of understanding. This act normally emerges and sometimes it immediately emerges as soon as we have constructed an image which triggers an act of direct understanding which goes beyond an image to grasp an understood that is somehow reflected by an image or which is somehow contained within a given image. Apt images function as symbols. They function as representative carriers of form or meaning since, in working with images, in words that Aquinas uses: a “movement to an image

speak about a movement which moves from potencies that are already partially determined and are thus lacking in certain degrees of potency (in other words, our understanding and knowing always works with potencies that are already informed to some extent by a degree of meaning which determines or which limits the possible reception of other, later forms), we should attend to a cognitional fact which realizes and knows that human understanding always exists as a given to a certain extent in the context of our ongoing, concrete human lives. Human understanding and knowledge has not always to be pursued in every single case since, in some cases, it already exists. It is already given. If we stop and think about our own understanding, we find that our understanding never moves from a pure state of ignorance (from a total or a complete lack of knowledge and understanding). In certain situations, it is not necessary to ask or to pose any questions about anything in order to move toward an experience of understanding. Certain things are already known. Certain things are already understood. In seeking any further or additional new understanding, we always move from what is already understood to what can perhaps be understood (what has yet to be understood). In other words, we move from act to act (from one act of understanding to another act of understanding; or, in yet other words, from one perfection that is present in a given act of understanding toward another perfection that is present to us within another act of understanding or which exists as an act of understanding). Cf. Aquinas, *Sententia Libri De anima*, 2, 11, 372. Recall Aristotle's observation that, in knowing, we move from the known to the unknown: from what we already know to what we do not yet know but which we hope to know. As Eric Voegelin speaks about what Aristotle says about the nature of human inquiry and about the kind of consciousness which exists at the beginning of any given human inquiry:

“A man in confusion (*aporon*) or wonder (*thaumazon*) is conscious (*oietai*) of being ignorant (*agnoian*).” (*Metaphysics*, 982b 18). From this restlessness in confusion arises the desire of man to know (*tou eidenai oregontai*) (980a 22).

Cf. Frederick Lawrence, “On ‘The Meditative Origin of the Philosophical Knowledge of Order,’” *The Beginning and the Beyond Papers from the Gadamer and Voegelin Conferences* Supplementary Issue of *Lonergan Workshop*, vol. 4, ed. Fred Lawrence (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1984): p. 58. In other words thus, if a person is conscious of his or her own ignorance in a given situation, in this consciousness of self, a person already knows about his or her ignorance. In the consciousness which we have of our own ignorance, we are conscious of our knowledge and about the tentative extent of our knowledge. A consciousness of our ignorance cannot exist without a consciousness of our knowledge. The two go together. They necessarily include and imply each other.

does not stop at the image; it goes on to the thing it represents.”²⁸ In other words, an imagined object functions as a heuristic tool (a heuristic device). It reveals a meaning, an intelligibility, within an image. As through the medium of light, an act of seeing beholds something that is seen, through a form of intellectual light, a phantasm is informed by a meaning as this same phantasm triggers an intellectual act which grasps a meaning in the phantasm which has been imaginatively presented to it.²⁹ A unseen, intelligible relation becomes immediately obvious to an acutely conscious human mind.³⁰ An intelligibility (a form) is experienced in a meaning and this meaning is something which is quite distinct from what is simply given to us in the experience of a phantasm.³¹ As Aquinas in his own way had spoken about these matters:

28 *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 81, a. 3, ad 3, my translation.

29 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 15, a. 2. Cf. Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 91. As Aquinas speaks about form as a species which exists as an “intelligible structure” or as an “intelligible species” (*species intelligibilis*), he argues, in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2, that “that by which the sight sees is the likeness of the visible thing and, likewise, the likeness of the thing understood, which is the intelligible species, is the form by which the intellect understands [in Latin: *unde similitudo rei visibilis est secundum quam visus videt; et similitudo rei intellectae, quae est species intelligibilis, est forma secundum quam intellectus intelligit*]. As the cause or principle of understanding, form is that “by which the understanding understands” (it is the *quo intelligit intellectus*). Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 75, 13; 1, 53, 2 & 4: “through this species the intellect comes to be in act.”

However, when we turn to the arguments which Aquinas gives earlier in the *De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1, we find that, although Aquinas speaks about a thing’s *eidōs* or form as its likeness or resemblance (*similitudo*), he employs or works with a notion of likeness as this applies to the nature of our human understanding (a notion of likeness which does not apply if we refer to our acts of sense). An immaterial meaning for likeness or resemblance is signified because the human intellect, as an immaterial receptor of forms or species, is not able to bring or to incorporate anything into itself which only possesses material co-ordinates. In this context, Aquinas uses language about images to talk about the meaning of a form, species, or *eidōs* although, in this same context, the appropriate meaning for an image must be one which speaks about the presence of an immaterial resemblance or the presence of an immaterial likeness. In direct acts of understanding, in apprehending any immaterial form of resemblance or any immaterial form of likeness, an immaterial universal meaning is grasped by a direct act of understanding in a manner which transcends material conditions or material coordinates as a given act of direct understanding moves toward a second kind of universality which is not given simply within the universality of a meaning but which is given within the universality of a meaning which is to be regarded now as a true or correct meaning (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 54, a. 2; q. 75, a. 6; q. 85, a. 2, ad 2). The presence of a transcendent immaterial meaning accordingly points to a significance which is universal or ubiquitous since, if you will, it rejects meanings that are determined by the presence or the influence of differences which refer to the presence of physical or material differences.

30 In his *Verbum*, p. 42, Bernard Lonergan gives a brief example which illustrates the transition which occurs as we move from sensation, through imagination, toward an act of direct understanding.

To understand circularity is to grasp by intellect a necessary nexus between imagined equal radii and imagined uniform curvature. The terms to be connected are sensibly perceived; their relation, connection,

Anyone can experience this for himself, that when he tries to understand something, he forms certain phantasms to serve him by way of examples, in which as it were he examines what he is desirous of understanding. For this reason it is that when we wish to help someone to understand something, we lay examples before him, from which he forms phantasms for the purpose of understanding.³²

Clarifications: Form and Species or Form versus Species

To avoid any confusions at this point, please note that, if the *form* of a thing or an event is to be

unification is what insight knows in the sensitive presentation.

Years later, in 1982, in *Caring About Meaning: patterns in the life of Bernard Lonergan*, eds. Pierrot Lambert, Charlotte Tansey, and Cathleen Going (Montreal: Thomas More Institute Papers, 1982), pp. 1-2, Lonergan gives a more precise example which illustrates how inquiry works with acts and data of sense to trigger an act of direct understanding which reveals the nature or form of a thing within the context of a sensible presentation. When speaking about the pedagogy of one of his teachers in mathematics, Fr. Charles O'Hara S.J., who had taught coordinate and projective geometry to Lonergan, Lonergan describes one of the methods that Fr. O'Hara had promoted among his students:

Flag the diagram. Draw a diagram; mark all the values you know on it. You should be able then to see an equation or two equations - - whatever you need - - and get the solution. Don't learn the trigonometrical formula by heart; just flag the diagram and read off the formula.

The understanding suggested by an appropriate, representative image suggests itself with a kind of necessity which is to be clearly distinguished from any purely logical or abstract necessity that refers to how one concept is implied by another. In cases of logical or abstract necessity, the meaning of a given concept suggests the meaning of second concept which already exists within the first meaning that perhaps we have been considering. See Bernard Lonergan's discussion in "A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion," *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J. (New York/Mahweh: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 206. In logical or abstract necessity, we refer to presences of deductive necessity. However, when we refer to the necessity which exists when we refer to how acts of imagining can be ordered to acts of direct understanding, we refer to the presence of a conditional species of necessity. The necessity of grasping a form within an image is defined by the concrete aptness of an image which suggests why a particular intelligible relation exists within the data of a given image. In the presence of logical or abstract necessities which are specified by rules of deductive logic, we work with meanings which are already known. Logical necessity, as a form of necessity, is experienced or put into effect at a later stage within the order of our human cognition since, before we can grasp a meaning which can be subject to forms of logical analysis, we must begin with presences which refer to experiences of intelligible or rational necessity which come to us when an act of direct understanding grasps why an arrangement of data possesses an inner, inherent form which should be too obvious for anyone to overlook or to deny.

³¹Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 11.

³²*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 84, a. 7. Later in q. 88, a. 1, after invoking the teaching authority of Aristotle, Aquinas again refers to cognitive self-experience as proof of the fact that our human minds

distinguished from the *species* of the same thing or the *species* of the same event (although, in some contexts if not in most contexts, form and species are viewed as meaning or referring to the same thing),³³ if we want to talk about form as something which is grasped within or through a direct act of understanding and species as something which is other than this grasped content, we might say that a species is what we know once we have moved through an act of conceptualization that has produced a definition which expresses the meaning of a specific form.³⁴ From form as an intelligibility which exists within a meaning that is given to us as the content or as the term of a direct act of understanding (form as it is grasped within a given set of material conditions), in or through one or more acts of conceptualization we can now speak about a form as it exists within multiple sets of material conditions that resemble each other and so, if we want to speak about an intelligibility which exists within this

are so configured that they can only understand something if they begin with images: if in our human cognition we first turn to images or phantasms and then go from there. Here, Aquinas does not cite any passages taken from Aristotle's writings although, earlier in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 84, a. 7, he had prefaced his own discussion by quoting a key text from Aristotle's *De Anima*, 3, 7, 431a16: "the soul understands [*intelligit*] nothing without a phantasm" which has also been translated as "the soul never understands apart from phantasms" (*Sentencia Libri De anima*, 431a17) although a more direct translation of Aristotle's text says that "the soul never thinks without an image." Cf. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984); vol. 1, p. 685). Later, in the same text, in the *De Anima* 431b2, Aristotle concludes that "the faculty of thinking then thinks the forms in the images" (p. 686). "Intellect grasps forms in images," as cited by Giovanni B. Sala, *Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, trans. Joseph Spoerl, ed. Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 161, n. 72. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles* 2, c. 76, n. 17, Aquinas had made the same argument.

Man abstracts from phantasms, and receives in his mind things actually intelligible. For, indeed, we should not have become aware of these actions had we not experienced them in ourselves. It follows that the principles to which we ascribe these actions, namely, the possible and agent intellects, must be powers formally existing in us.

In conclusion, it is to be noted that Aquinas frequently refers to self-conscious human experience as the basis or the litmus test for his arguments about the structure of human cognition and how our human understanding functions in its different operations. To cite one example found in both the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, in order to disprove the claim that the human intellect is somehow separate from the human body or that it functions apart from the body, Aquinas adverts to the obvious experience that each person has of his own thinking and knowing (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 4; *Sentencia Libri De anima*, 3, 7, 690, p. 208).

For it is clear that the actually intelligent being is this particular man.
Whoever denies this implies that he himself understands nothing.

33See how Lonergan speaks about form and species in *Verbum*, p. 175. See also *Collection*, p. 284, n. g., for an editorial definition of "*eidōs*" and species that talks about form as the meaning or apt translation of these terms. For Aristotle, "regularly" or usually, form is *eidōs* (or *morphē*) although, at times, *eidōs* has been translated as species first in Latin and later in English. Cf. Byrne, "Teleology, Modern Science and Verification," p. 4, n. 4; Lonergan, *Caring about Meaning*, p. 45; *Topics in*

larger context of common conditions, we then best speak about the species of a given kind of thing or the species of a given kind of event. The intelligibility present within a form and the intelligibility present within a species do not really differ from each other. In form and species, we find the same meaning even if we can also say that the meaning present in a species can be rightly understood as a significance that somehow means more. The meaning is deeper or larger because it has been added to or augmented.³⁵ In a term or as a term that is known through an inner word or a concept which proceeds from an act of conceptualization, a species is able to speak about a form in a manner which links it to a universalized notion of matter (a universalized notion which refers to a presence of common matter and not to any instance of particular matter as this is given to us in any act of sense). Through every act of conceptualization, every form that exists within a given set of material conditions is detached more fully from a given set of material conditions and so, in the transposition which occurs here, a form is now known as a species. In this context, a form can be properly referred to as a species.

However, if, for some reason, a given person does not want to go to the trouble of making a distinction which points to some kind of real distinction which could be present in the relation which exists between form and species, a verbal distinction (a verbal difference) could be the only kind of distinction which we can think about. The difference which is noticed at this level exists as a difference about mere words and one's choice of words. But, on the other hand, if we want to move into an analysis that attends to the possible relevance of a real distinction (a real difference) between an act of understanding and an act of conceptualization, then we get into a thinking about possible real distinctions which derives from the real difference that exists between the term of an act of direct understanding and the term of an act of conceptualization. As has already been noted, an identical intelligibility can be posited. In form and species, a common intelligibility is shared. But, on the other hand, if we compare the meaning of a form with the meaning of a species, the meaning of a species differs from a form when we realize that a species is differently related to matter than what we find when we refer to the presence of a form. A form, in its meaning, is abstracted, detached, or separated from a connection with specific material conditions through an abstracting act of direct understanding

Education, p. 171; *Verbum*, p. 175. In Lonergan's translation, *eidos* translates as "forms." For both Aristotle and for Aquinas, *eidos* as form refers to what is known through an act of the intellect or the mind (through *nous*) and not what is known through an act of sense perception. Cf. Byrne, *Analysis and Science in Aristotle*, p. 198; p. 200. With respect specifically to forms (and not to essences), in Aristotle's *De anima*, 3, 7, 431b 2 (as cited and translated by Lonergan in *Collection*, p. 138), it is said that "the faculty of understanding grasps the forms in images"; in the original Greek: τὰ μὲν οὖν εἶδη τὸ νοητικὸν ἐν τοῖς φαντάσμασι νοεῖ.

³⁴See Patrick Byrne, "The Thomist Sources of Lonergan's Dynamic World-view," *The Thomist* 46 (1982): 128.

³⁵If we recall to mind or if we can think about what it is like to solve a mathematical problem in geometry, at one level, we suddenly realize that a given angle must always equal this other given angle. However, at another level, once we realize that a given angle must always equal this other given angle, we also realize that we are standing in the presence of a mathematical law. We first solve a problem by grasping a meaning that is given to us in the presence of a form. But, through a conceptualization that moves within our intellectual consciousness, we also find and notice that this same form which we understand is a form that also points to the presence of an invariant mathematical law (a mathematical law which is invariant within the kind of geometry that we are supposing through the kind of work that we are doing to solve a given mathematical problem).

but a species, in its meaning, is rejoined or reconnected to material conditions when these conditions are referenced in a manner which refers to the principle of common matter. An inner connection (an inner relation) exists between a form as a species and an understanding of matter which has been specified in terms which speak about common matter. Whether or not we can clearly find these distinctions in Aristotle and Aquinas or the degree that we can find these distinctions is a question that cannot be answered unless a competent inquiry and reading of texts is undertaken. However, since, in Aquinas, we do find that a real distinction exists between acts of understanding and acts of conceptualization,³⁶ on the basis of this real distinction, we can go on to speak about a real distinction which should exist between form and species, even as we find and even as we admit that Aquinas uses these terms in an interchangeable fashion. *Forma intelligibilis* and *species intelligibilis* refer to the same thing.³⁷

Form and Essence or Form versus Essence

Turning to another differentiation of meaning which is more well known and which is more commonly spoken about (and which does not differ from any kind of real distinction that we might want to draw between form and species), on the basis of the same real distinction which exists between a direct act of understanding and an act of conceptualization, we can say that the form of a thing or the form of an event is to be distinguished from the essence of a thing or the essence of an event. Form, as an intelligibility which has been abstracted from a set of material conditions, functions as a principle of explanation. It is the *quo est* or the “that by which” something is,³⁸ or, with respect to the *quo aliquid est*, it is that “by which something is,”³⁹ or, on the other hand, in cognitional terms, it is the *id quo intelligitur*; it is “that by which something is understood.”⁴⁰ However, within the order of our human cognition, it is by first understanding a form as an intelligible species that we then move from there to understand the meaning of an essence.⁴¹ From form, we shift to essence.

³⁶Aquinas, *De Potentia*, q. 8, a. 1 and q. 9, a. 5 (as referenced by Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 23, n. 48) other texts not withstanding.

³⁷See Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 175, for a discussion that points to the interchangeable use which we find in Aquinas although the evidence which exists that points to the existence of interchangeable use should not lead us to conclude with any degree of certainty that Aquinas was unaware of certain distinctions which were present to his self-understanding (distinctions that he was probably aware of within his acts of understanding but which he could not so clearly distinguish in the conceptuality that was available to him and which he used in his choice of external words). The scientific methodology and specifications of meaning which exist in our own day was not the scientific methodology and the specification of meaning which was available to Aquinas in the context of his own day and time. Cf. *Verbum*, p. 51.

³⁸Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences* I, d. 8, q. 5, a. 2, cited by *An Aquinas Reader*, ed. Mary T. Clark (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1972), p. 44.

³⁹Aquinas, *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 5, 10, 904.

⁴⁰Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2. In the context of Aquinas's argument, “form” can be equated with “intelligible species.” In the apprehension or understanding of any form, intelligible species are understood.

⁴¹See Byrne, “Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” pp. 383-384, for an explanation about how it is possible to make this distinction. Please also note that, in his exegesis of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book 7, in his *Understanding and Being*, p. 51, Lonergan argues that Aristotle clearly

In other words, in shifting from form to essence, within the order of our human cognition, we move from a question which asks about why something exists in the way that it does to a second kind of question which asks for a definition which explains what a given thing is. To explain what is meant here, if we refer to an obvious difference in conceptuality which exists between the posing of “why” and “what” questions and if we would like to distinguish between the asking of these two specifications of question, it is not to be denied that a difference in object can be postulated when we refer to “why” questions and “what” questions. In asking “why” questions, we ask “why V is X?” or “why is this V is an X?” or, in another wording, we ask “what makes this V an X?”. According to the kind of question which we are posing here, we distinguish between an object which is already given to us through an

distinguishes between form and definition: *to ti ên einai* refers to form; *to ti estin* (literally, “the what-it-is”) refers to definition (to “what something is”). Cf. *Understanding and Being*, p. 398. The first refers to the “content of an insight”; the second, a “conception” or a “general definition.” Cf. *Understanding and Being*, p. 51. In Aristotle's conceptuality, *ousia* is used to refer to essence (i.e., form as joined to matter). Cf. *Understanding and Being*, p. 51, citing Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 8. The *ousia* of a thing refers to its essence.

However, as Lonergan notes with respect to how Aristotle understands the relation between form and definition (the movement from form to definition and a converse movement which moves from definition to form), “the *to ti ên einai* is what you understand before you are able to formulate it; it is the form, the *intelligibile in sensibilibus* (the intelligible in the sensible).” Through an essence, through the formulation which exists in an essence, we can go back to form and so be able to say to ourselves what we have understood. See also Lonergan, *Early Works*, p. 28. Cognitionally, in Aristotle, we move from form toward a conception or the being of a definition.

In the intricacies of Aristotle's conceptuality, *to ti esti* (the essence or literally, “the what-it-is”) and *to ti ên einai* (the essence or literally, “the-what-it-is-to-be”; or “what a thing was to be” according to another translation) both refer to form as a principle which is signified when we speak about the possible presence of form within a given context or situation. Cf. Byrne, “Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” p. 384; Byrne, *Analysis and Science in Aristotle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 14, citing Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1024b5-16; p. 127, citing Aristotle, *Topics*, 101b37-102a4. See also Lonergan, *Early Works*, p. 28. In *Verbum*, pp. 29-30, Lonergan accordingly notes that essence as *quod quid est* [“what something is” or, as Lonergan explains or translates “is or corresponds to the essence or essential definition”] translates Aristotle's *to ti estin* and that *quod quid erat esse* [“formal cause” or, as Lonergan translates or explains: “essence or essential definition” but as grounded in “the formal cause”] literally translates Aristotle's *to ti ên einai*. The *ti ên einai* speaks about the being of a “formal cause” or literally: “the essence, what a thing was to be.” Cf. “Lexicon of Latin and Greek Words and Phrases,” *Verbum*, p. 315; p. 320.

In Aristotle also, it should be recalled that *aition tou einai* [the cause of being] refers to form (the principle of form). As Lonergan translates and cites from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 7, 17 in *Insight*, pp. 390-391, we say that “the cause of being is its immanent form.” In other words, “form is what causes matter to be a thing” since, cognitionally, form responds to a question which asks “why is this the case?” or “what makes this that?” as in “why is this type of body a man?” or “what makes this body human?”. Instead of directly responding to a question which asks about “what something is,” in Lonergan's own words, “form is known in knowing the answer to the question, Why are these sensible

initial or first act of cognition and another object which has yet to be given to us through a second, later act of cognition. An initial object is given to us and it is known *to a certain extent* through a corresponding act of cognition and, according to the order which exists among human acts of cognition, we know that this first act is an act of sense. If, for example, we ask a question which asks “why is this body a man?” or “what makes this body human?”, we know that something exists for us as a body (an object which is sensed). Sensible characteristics are immediately known or they are immediately given to us through our various acts of sense. But, in seeking to identify reasons which can explain why a given body exists as more than what it is simply as a body, we seek or we try to move beyond an act of sense towards an act of direct understanding whose term or content is unlike anything which can be given to us through any of our acts of sense. In other words, in the posing of “why” questions or in posing “what” questions which exist as “why” questions, our point of departure is always an inquiry into matter or an inquiry about matter (a particular configuration of matter that we notice or refer to in a given instance of it) and the proximate terminus or goal of our question is always an act of direct understanding which now tentatively knows about an intelligibility which refers to the presence of a form. The form, as an idea, exists as the term of a direct act of understanding.

In Lonergan's own words and by way of an example that he uses, if we ask “Why is V a man?”, we respond by noting that “V stands for the sensible data of a man” and that “the answer is the formal cause.”⁴² The formal cause or the form, in this case, refers to the human soul while the sensible data refers to the presence of a given human body. The object of a “why” question is an understanding which can refer to the intelligibility of a form and the intelligible relation or structure which exists within a given form. In understanding “why is X a Y?” or “what causes X to be a Y?” or “what makes an X a Y?”, we respond with an answer which can be framed in terms which can be transliterated into English from Aristotle's use of Greek and which can thus speak about the possible presence of a “the what-X-is-to-be-a-Y.”⁴³

However, in moving to “what” questions which ask about the inherent natures of things, we ask about a formal cause *as this is embedded within the data of our sensible experience*. We ask about a thing's essence, its quiddity, or its “whatness.”⁴⁴ Our point of departure is an inquiry which asks not about a particular instance or experience of matter (as in “why is this body a man?” or “why is this type of body a man?” or “what makes this body human?”) but about an experience of matter that has been generalized to refer to all instances of a specific kind. We ask here about a species of being which refers to the being of a supposit (a secondary substance or, “secondary thing,” if we work with an adaptation of Lonergan's technical language) which, in our ordinary language, we would signify through a common noun which collectively represents or stands for the being of all possible instances to which a number of predicates can be properly applied.⁴⁵

data to be conceived as of one thing, of a man, of a house?” Cf. *Verbum*, p. 195. On the other hand, if we would want to respond to a question which asks about what something is, in this context only, we would work toward an understanding that can be conceptualized in a manner which is able to speak about the presence or the meaning of an essence.

⁴²Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 29.

⁴³Byrne, “Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” p. 385.

⁴⁴Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 15, a. 2, ad 3; *Sententia Libri De Anima*, 3, 7, 705-719.

⁴⁵By way of an example, “man” as opposed to “this man” exists both as a common noun (or secondary substance) and also as a supposit or *suppositum* while “this man” exists as a particular noun (or primary substance) and also as a finite supposit or finite individual. Cf. Owens, *Elementary*

From a question which exists as an unqualified species of “what” question, we get an unqualified species of answer: an essence which exists in a strict sense (lacking in any qualification which could lessen the degree that it exists as an essence) versus an essence which could be lacking in degrees of completeness or which exists in a qualified way because it responds to a “what” question which attends to an aspect of some kind which has yet to be understood.⁴⁶ Compare a question which asks “what is a tree?” with a question which asks “what is the nature of photosynthesis as this applies to the growth and life of trees?”. From essences that exist in a strict sense, we get substances (substances which exist as secondary substances or as suppositis). If, in the meaning of any given essence, nothing is said about a presence of relations within a given definition (about a relation to anything else), then, in this context, we can speak about essences as they exist in themselves and, as a consequence of this manner of speaking, we can speak about substances which exist in themselves and not about substances as they

Christian Metaphysics, pp. 152-153. We respectively distinguish here between secondary substances and primary substances. If we want to speak simply about suppositis, we refer to the presence or the being of an unspecified individual: an individual which can indifferently refer to any given individual (no specific individual being identified) or, in some cases, a supposit can refer to an entire class of beings. An entire class of beings is spoken or referred to in a way which converts a class of beings into a generic kind of individual. In this case too, no particular individual is being specified. Cf. Joseph, *Introduction to Logic*, p. 19, n. 2. In this context, we speak about an individuality which refers to what can be known or what we can interrogate when we want to speak about a nature which exists as a concrete universal (as in “man” or “mankind”) which can then be applied to understanding a large number of specific individuals who can then be regarded as finite suppositis. Technically speaking, according to some accounts, a supposit exists as an “individuated nature.” A supposit exists as a “completed nature” (citing Owens, p. 152) although, if we want to refer to it as an “individuated nature,” we do not refer to any kind of instantiation which would invoke an act of being which, if added, would account for the existence of a specific, concretely existing individual. In comparing a supposit with a finite supposit, a supposit possesses a lesser degree of individuality than the specific individuality of finite suppositis (which exist as primary substances). The individuality of finite suppositis varies as we move from one concrete instantiation of form to another concrete instantiation of form or, in another way of speaking, as we move from a given concretely existing being to another given concretely existing being (where both beings, as individuals, differently share in the same nature). Cf. Owens, p. 153.

Turning to concretely existing things, a given human being as a person exists as a finite supposit. Its being refers to an “individuated nature” which is joined to a concrete, specific act of being. In thus asking “what” questions in “what is man?” or “what is a man?” or “what is animal?” or “what is an animal?,” we refer to the presence of a supposit and not to the presence of a finite supposit. We ask for a reason (a *ratio*) which would exist as an internal relation of parts which forms a whole as this whole exists in an embodied manner. We ask about a meaning which refers to an essence although, when the presence of a reason or the presence of an intelligible relation is distinguished from any union or connection with matter, what we have is simply the presence of a form and not the presence of an essence, a quiddity, or a “whatness.” Cf. Aquinas, *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 5, 10, 904. In asking “what” questions, the proximate terminus or goal is always an act of conceptualization which is able to speak about the presence of an essence.

⁴⁶Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 38, citing Lonergan, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum*: 5.

exist *per se* through themselves (through a relation which a substance would allegedly have with itself).⁴⁷ The absence of any kind of relation distinguishes what exists absolutely as a substance from what exists absolutely as some kind of accident which exists because of how it is related to something else and because it cannot exist apart from how it is related to something else. Essences which exist “in a restricted sense” are always to be identified with accidents since no accident can exist apart from how it is related to something else and how it exists in something else, the intelligibility of an accident differing from the intelligibility of a substance.

By attending then to the order of cognition as this exists among human beings and how acts of sensing are normally followed by acts of direct understanding and later acts of conceptualization, we can say that, while the object of every sensible experience is always an object which exists as matter or which exists within matter, the first object of our human understanding through reasoning and analysis is always a form (or a proportion) which our understanding grasps in every direct act of understanding. Since the object is always a strictly intelligible relation, a mathematical formula perhaps best illustrates the kind of understanding which is being sought when we think about the possible meaning (the possible configuration) of a form although, if we put an intelligible relation into an expression which exists in a manner which is akin to the denotation of a mathematical formula that we can speak about and tell others about, in doing this, we move from the presence of a form to the presence of an essence (from an apprehension of form to the apprehension of an essence). In a form, an intelligible relation joins intelligible elements into a whole and the whole, as an intelligibility, then serves to point to the intelligibility of each element (explaining the meaning of each element). But, in an essence, the same kind of relation is transposed into a communicable form of expression. The expression helps us to grow in the understanding which we can possibly have of a given form. From form we move to essence and then possibly we can move back to form (perhaps to the same form) through new questions that can begin to arise for us as human subjects.

With respect to the order of constitution which thus exists with respect to essences, essences exist as compounds of form and common matter,⁴⁸ and they are to be distinguished from a “that which is” or an *id quod est* which suggests a thing’s concrete existence (its real existence or, in the other words, the fullness of its existence).⁴⁹ Essences exist as “that by which (a thing) is” or as an *id quo est* which

47Bernard Lonergan, *Early Latin Theology*, p. 97. While, admittedly, if we speak about a given thing or a substance which exists through a relation which it has with itself, we are referring to a relation of reason and not to a relation of being (a relation of being which exists as a real relation since, in every real relation, two or more distinct real beings are being related to each other in some way), the presence of any kind of relation is excluded if we can think about essences and about substances which are both understood and spoken about in a manner which avoids any kind of reference to a presence of relations. By speaking about essences and substances in a manner which totally excludes any relations, we find a way to break from a point of view which tries to say that everything can be understood in terms of relations and the being of relations. Some things exist apart from the presence of any kind of relation and the order of constitution which exists whenever we refer to relations. For further discussions, see Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 38 & n. 9. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1, 25, 10, Aquinas had noted that “being through itself is not included in the definition of substance.” Cf. <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraGentiles1.htm#25>, October 23, 2012.

48Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 142: “in a material creature essence is composed of potency and form.”

49To avoid confusion here, recall how Aristotle's understanding of substance differs from that

suggests that the essence or quiddity of a thing is to be understood in terms which primarily refer to a principle of explanation which is then applied to something else which is now being understood.⁵⁰ Form and essence each exist as principles of explanation although forms are known through prior acts of direct understanding and essences, through later acts of conceptualization. A form is known in or through a definition which, as known, refers to an essence.⁵¹ Form is to be distinguished (it is not to be identified with that which is being understood or known).⁵² It is not to be identified with any *id quod intelligitur* (a “that which is understood”) which, as a form *embedded in matter*, is to be identified with the proper object of our human inquiry. Form embedded in matter exists as something which exists externally outside our minds and about which questions can be asked and an understanding sought.⁵³ Through the principle of form, through grasping an intelligible within a sensible (an intelligibility

of Aquinas. For Aristotle, essence (“that which is”) is to be identified with substance. A given thing exists if a given instance of matter receives a specific form. Matter, as a passive principle, is informed by form, functioning as an active principle. Cf. Michael Novak, “A Key to Aristotle’s ‘Substance’,” *Substances and Things: Aristotle’s Doctrine of Physical Substance in Recent Essays*, pp. 188-208; Lonergan, *Incarinate Word*, p. 145. In some texts of Aquinas, we can find Aristotelian language which identifies finite essences with “that which is”: a “that which is” which is not joined to an act of being or an act of existence. See Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 54; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 3, a. 3; q. 50, a. 2, ad 3; q. 75, a. 2, ad 1 & ad 2, as cited by Lonergan, *Incarinate Word*, p. 146. In this context thus, when we read Aquinas from an Aristotelian perspective, we are tempted to identify finite essences with substances (an Aristotelian understanding of essence leading to an Aristotelian understanding of substance). However, in Aquinas, we also find that a substance can also refer to a reality which is more than what exists when we only refer to the being of essences. Substances also exist when essences are joined to acts of being or to acts of existence. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 29, a. 4, ad 2; 3a, q. 17, a. 1, ad 7; q. 17, a. 2 & ad 4; Lonergan, *Incarinate Word*, p. 151; p. 158. A substance which exists as an essence differs from a substance to which an act of being is joined as a constituent variable. A real distinction is to be adverted to because of a real distinction which exists respectively between an act of direct understanding and an act of reflective understanding (an act of understanding which exists as a judgment).

⁵⁰Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 17, a. 2, ad 4. Cf. Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, p. 210; Roland Krismer, “Zu: *Summa Theologica* I, Frage 16, Artikel, Antwort,” “Anmerkung zur *Respondeo* im Lichte von Lonergans *Understanding and Being*,” <http://www.lonergan.at/philo/artikel.php?ID=8#Anmerkungen>, April 13, 2004.

⁵¹Byrne, “Lonergan’s Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” p. 386.

⁵²*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 56, a. 2, ad 3. Aquinas distinguishes between the form or species of a thing that exists within somebody else’s mind and the natural or real existence of a thing which exists apart from whether or not it is understood and known by another being. The form or species of a thing, as it exists in the mind of a knower, is referred to as an “intelligible existence” which has cognitively intended. Hence, “intelligible existence” is to be associated with “intentional existence.” In direct acts of understanding, we move from and through an “intentional existence” toward an “intelligible existence.”

⁵³*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2. In two unpublished papers, “Scotus on the object of understanding,” pp. 6-10, and most especially in “Scotus on concepts,” pp. 5-6, Giorgio Pini discusses a critical distinction that Aquinas had drawn in 1a, q. 85, a. 2 of the *Summa Theologiae* which allows him to escape from a form of subjectivism that regards the human knower as a self-enclosed subject whose understanding and knowing exists as a purely private affair that is disconnected from possibly understanding and knowing anything which exists outside the human mind. Form, as a cognitive tool,

within a sensibility), we understand something which is first given to us through prior acts of sense (through a form of presentation which can include a species of sense data that is communicated through a linguistic form of representation).⁵⁴ The words of a given language can refer to what can be known and experienced through our acts of sense.

However, on the other hand, if we compare a form with an essence, in contrast with form, an essence can be understood to exist also as an *id quod intelligitur* (as a “that which is understood”). It is a “that which is understood” as our acts of direct understanding move from the intelligibility that is understood in a form to the intelligibility that is understood in an essence. As has been noted, in the quiddity or essence of a material thing (in a *quidditas rei materialis*), a form is understood in conjunction with its relation to matter (through a specification of matter which speaks about proper or common matter and not about instances of particular matter).⁵⁵ Note, for example, the difference between “man” and a “particular man.” Hence, while the form of a thing can exist both within our understanding (our minds) and within a set of material conditions (given in our experience of sense data), essences emerge within conceptualizing acts of understanding so that we can begin to speak about what has been understood by us in our understanding as our understanding attends to things or events which exist independently of whether or not they are being inquired about or understood. As has been previously noted,⁵⁶ in the existence of every essence which exists as the proper term of a human act of conceptualization, two universals are united to each other: a universal which refers to an abstracted form and a second universal which refers to an abstracted specification of matter which exists as common matter. Common matter never exists as a datum belonging to any given act of sense. However, because

is “that by which something is understood” and, as a cognitive tool or means, it is to be clearly distinguished from “that which is being understood” (which refers to an externally existing extra-mental object that we try to understand in a manner which uses both our acts of sense and our acts of understanding). Their identification would imply that what is being understood exists only within the internal operations of our human minds and not also outside of it. However, to think or to assume that what is being understood is thus somehow disjointed or disconnected from what has been previously sensed is to create a point of view or a point of departure which suggests that our human minds (our understanding) is not able to go back on itself and, through a form of critical self-reflection, move toward an understanding that can grasp how our acts of sensing and our acts of understanding are related to each other in a positive manner, each genre of activity mutually assisting the other in an exchange that brings our human cognition toward a development of itself which culminates in an experience of truth and a knowledge of reality. In the distinction which thus exists between *quod* and *quo* (where *quod* refers to the object of sensible and intellectual operations and *quo* refers to one or more reasons which can explain why something has been grasped as the term of an act of understanding), we have reasons of one kind or another for our direct acts of understanding, for our acts of judgment and choice, and for our acts of faith, hope, and charity. Rational acts are distinguished from all other kinds of acts because of this difference which is present to us within consciousness. In every rational act, an awareness of reasons exists and an awareness also of the sufficiency of our reasons. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, pp. 100-102.

⁵⁴Lonergan, *Early Works*, p. 28.

⁵⁵*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 84, aa. 7-8; q. 85, a. 5, ad 3; a. 8; q. 86, a. 2.

⁵⁶See earlier notes with respect to Question 2, Chapter 2 of Lonergan's *The Triune God: Systematics* and what is said there about how we can distinguish a form from an essence (meaning as the term of an act of understanding and a definition as the term of an act of conceptualization).

essences exist as principles of understanding which are postulated in order to understand things or events which exist independently of whether or not they are being inquired about or understood (things or events which exist as the primary objects of our questioning, reasoning, and understanding),⁵⁷ they function in an instrumental way as points of entry which can possibly lead us toward posing new questions and enjoying new, additional acts of understanding.

To better understand the reality of concretely existing things and the reality of concretely existing events, we can ask questions about the conceptual reality of what has been defined and uttered as this term of meaning has emerged from a prior, conditioning act of conceptualization. As a given essence emerges in the conduct of any given inquiry, we have a meaning which has been thematized and objectified and, as objectified or externalized, it can now be confronted or queried through new questions that can ask about the existence of other further possible meanings or about the truth or the falsity of a meaning that exists in a given essence.⁵⁸ In essences, meanings have been set apart. They

57Recall here the teaching of Aquinas as this is given in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2: a real distinction which exists between what is secondarily understood and what is primarily understood as this occurs in any given direct act of understanding. A species or form, as the term of an act of direct understanding, is what is secondarily understood. But, a thing to which a species or form refers is what is primarily understood. Through a form as “that by which something is understood,” functioning as an explanatory means, we understand a “that which is understood” even as we must distinguish between a form as “that by which something is understood” and “that which is understood.” Hence, by way of application, if an essence also exists as “that by which something is being understood,” what is being primarily understood is not the essence of any given thing nor the essence of any given event but rather the thing itself as it exists in all its concreteness or the event itself as it exists in all its concreteness. We understand the kind of being which a given thing or an event has and we also know about what kinds of operations a given thing is able to undertake and to receive.

58See how in *Verbum*, p. 201, Lonergan distinguishes between an experience of identity which exists in every direct act of understanding (an identity that is enjoyed between an act of understanding and what is understood as the term of one's act of understanding) and an experience of confrontation and distinction which exists between subject and object when, from an act of conceptualization, we have an essence which has been formulated in such a way that it can now be investigated by the asking of further questions. As Lonergan speaks about what happens when acts of understanding are succeeded by later acts of conceptualization, what is understood in a direct act of understanding is objectified when later acts of conceptualization emerge from prior direct acts of understanding. The lack of a real distinction which exists with regard to the difference between an act of understanding and what is understood as the term of an act of understanding is succeeded by the emergence of a real distinction that exists between an act of understanding and an act of conceptualization as an act of conceptualization arises from the prior being of an act of direct understanding. On this distinction, see, for instance, *Verbum*, pp. 189-190, where Lonergan distinguishes between acts of direct understanding (existing as an act of apprehensive abstraction) and acts of conceptualization (existing as an act of formative abstraction). Something which exists in a preconceptual way (an intelligibility embedded within matter grasped in an act of understanding) comes to exist in an externalized, conceptual way (as an intelligibility that is separated from any concrete instance of instantiation within matter because of an emanating act of conceptualization). A difference in mode can be admitted without difficulty although, if we want to speak about the existence of a real difference, we can speak about how, in a conception, an intelligibility is joined to a universalized notion of matter to produce an object which

can be approached from external points of view and they can be known through the mediation which occurs in our acts of sense (as our acts of sense encounter experiences of sense data which refer to the outer words of our language and speech). If then, by acts of direct understanding, forms are derived from experiences of sense data, by a converse or reverse movement, through acts of conceptualization or, more accurately, on the basis of conditioning acts of conceptualization, essences can now be applied to what we have been experiencing and to what we have been understanding.

By way then of coming to conclusions on the relation which exists between form and essence, the following points can be noted. Even if we grant that, if true, the essence of a thing is to be identified with an embodied object which exists as the proper object of our human intellectual inquiry (as the object of our questions that ask for reasons or an explanation), form emerges as the particularly distinctive end or goal of our inquiry. It exists as a species of final cause. As an intermediate final cause, it exists as a constitutive principle of inquiry since it is that which is intended by our questions where the fundamental interrogatory form refers to a “what is it?” In Latin, *quid sit?* A sequence of different cognitional acts forms into a recurrent pattern or sequence if a person's consciousness is to move from one act to another toward the enjoyment of a satisfactory act of understanding which, admittedly, always exists as a reception.⁵⁹ And, because the asking of questions seeking understanding always transcends the doing which exists in acts of sensing, form emerges as a new term or new object which transcends the being of purely material objects (objects which are known as terms of acts of sense). As intended and later, as apprehended (when a form is grasped as the term of a direct act of understanding), as a formal cause which confers meaning or which functions as a source of intelligibility, form accounts for what is understood when we want to think about the existence of every other kind of explanatory variable. Form, for instance, accounts for the existence of every other kind of cause (if, for instance, we want to speak about the nature of a material cause, the nature of an efficient cause, and the nature of a final cause). Form as formal cause explains why other causes might be needed in a given situation and how different causes relate to each other in a way which is needed to produce a desired effect.

cannot be simply equated or reduced to what exists as an object which had existed as the term of a direct act of understanding. In a conception which exists as the term of an act of conceptualization, we begin to have something which can exist as an other. We can have a meaning or definition which we can begin to work with and which others can begin to work with and argue about (something which can be easily communicated to others as we move from any inner words that know about what we have understood in a prior act of direct understanding toward any outer words that express this understanding in how we choose and combine words in a new crafting of our speech and language). As Lonergan noted years later in *Third Collection*, p. 92, in Aristotle's understanding of human cognition, “coincidence preceded distinction.” It was a later understanding of human cognition which was able to talk about a process of objectification that occurs within human cognition (as acts of direct understanding yield to emanating acts of conceptualization). In the Trinitarian theology of St. Augustine, we find the origins of this later development.

⁵⁹See how Byrne in “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” pp. 15-16, speaks about Aristotle's understanding of final cause. If we work from a postulation which points to a particular final cause, we can understand how a number of different steps would necessarily go together into a unit, form, or relation which, when known, explicates a fuller meaning for what can be said about the meaning of a final cause.

In Aristotle's listing of four necessary causes which are needed to explain how something emerges or moves from non-being to being (how something comes to be), a formal cause (form) refers to a thing or an event in terms simply of its actuality or being: or, in other words, what something is apart from its becoming what it is as it is.⁶⁰ If we know the formal cause of a thing as a thing fully exists in the reality and maturity of its being, we should know how or why it has come to be in the way that it has come to be.⁶¹ A formal cause, for instance, explains the need for one or more material causes in a given context or in a given situation. Form, as formal cause, identifies which material causes are sometimes needed and which are not needed. The same cause also explains why one or more instrumental or efficient causes are sometimes needed in a given situation and it identifies which of these causes must be employed if certain changes are to be brought about in the being of things. Efficient causes help to

60Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 9. Hence, if a formal cause accounts for the being and character of all the other causes, its priority, as a principle of explanation, suggests why a like priority and ordering exists in the order of being or reality. Before the existence of any potency or any coming to be, the necessary precondition is something which already fully exists. Potency presumes actuality but not the reverse: actuality, potency. In the context of a world which already exists, one cannot have something that is akin to creation *ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing).

61In his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, Aquinas cites Aristotle to the effect that “what” and “why” questions “basically coincide.” Cf. *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 7, 17, 1651; 7, 17, 1667-1668. In his *Posterior Analytics*, 2, 2, 90a31; 1, p. 148, Aristotle had noted that “to know what it is (*ti esti*) is the same as to know why it is (*dià ti*),” a point which simply reiterates what he had argued earlier in 90a15-17 when speaking about how what and why questions resemble each other with respect to questions asking about the nature of a lunar eclipse. Quoting Aristotle’s words (as cited by Michael P. Maxwell, Jr. in his “Lonergan’s Critique of Aristotle’s Notion of Science,” *Lonergan Workshop: Lonergan’s Openness: Polymorphism, Postmodernism, and Religion*, vol. 18, edited by Fred Lawrence, p. 162):

For it is evident that in all these the whatness and the why are the same. Thus, to the question “what is an eclipse?” one may answer, “It is the privation of light from the moon, [caused] by the earth’s interposition”; and to the question “Why is there an eclipse?” or “Why is the moon being eclipsed?”, one may answer, “Because its light disappears when the earth is interposed between the sun and the moon.

In his *Metaphysics*, 7, 17, in another kind of way, Aristotle makes the same point when he argues that a question asking “What is it?” or *Quid sit?* is to be interpreted as asking *Propter Quid?* or “Why this particular thing or being is the being or thing which it happens to be?” The object is an explanation of some sort which can refer to a formal cause or formal principle which states a reason saying why something is the kind of being that it happens to be. Sometimes “what” questions can be immediately interpreted or viewed as “why” questions although, sometimes, they need to be transposed into “why” questions before inquiries can then follow which can possibly lead to understanding. Cf. Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, pp. 147-148; *Understanding and Being*, p. 30, p. 32; *Phenomenology and Logic*, pp. 104-105; Novak, p. 200. Aquinas’s *quod quid erat esse* (“essence or essential definition, but with a very special reference to the ground of essential definition, namely, the formal cause”) refers to a general formal principle which exists as a response to why questions and this formal principle is neither a genus, a species, nor an individual thing although it explains all these different things. Cf. Aquinas,

explain why certain relations should exist or why certain relations might exist between one being and other beings. And, lastly, a formal cause also explains why certain ends are to be sought and why certain other ends are not to be sought or desired.⁶² As a heuristic which shapes the “first operations of the mind,” form can be regarded as a principle which is more primary than other principle. A primacy belongs to it that is not enjoyed by any other metaphysical principle.⁶³ The intended form of a thing or an event (within the order of our human cognition) or, in other words, the formal cause of a thing or an event (within the order of being) is that which elicits a whole series of human acts and actions within the order of our human cognition: actions and acts which are determined and shaped by our desire for understanding and which are facilitated by the exercise of this desire in any actions which are undertaken in order for us to move toward the possible reception of one or more acts of understanding.

Sententia super Metaphysicam, 7, 2, 1275; Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 581; *Verbum*, p. 315.

⁶²*Insight*, p. 507. In the technical explanation which Byrne gives in “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” pp. 15-16, it is noted that, when form is employed to try and answer a question which asks why a given thing is changing in the way that it does, it can be said about form that it can be interpreted or construed in three different ways:

...the form as overall integral organization of characteristic behavior [formal cause]; the form of that which first has form and thereby stimulates a reorganization of the moved, either in whole or in part [efficient cause]; and finally as the developmental sequence specified by means of its ideally completed form [final cause].

Formal cause, efficient cause, and final cause each refer to the presence of an intelligibility and, whenever a direct act of understanding knows anything about a formal cause, an efficient cause, or a final cause, we have an understood which, in metaphysical terms, is to be identified with presences of form. Every understood cause exists as a reason or an explanation and, for this reason, we can speak about a correlation or an isomorphism which exists between any understood cause and what exists when we speak about form as a metaphysical principle.

However, Aristotle had spoken about four necessary causes which all be invoked together in some way if we are to explain any being, object, or act which belongs to the world of our common experience: a material cause is distinguished and it is joined to presences of formal cause, efficient cause, and final cause. Material causes, in their content, are directly known by us through our acts of sense (what is known exists as the term or the datum of an act of sense and what is known is directly correlated with instances or apprehensions of some kind of material substratum which are then correlated with what we understand when we speak about the presence of a material cause and the the causality of material causes). However, when, through our understanding, we know about the specificity of material causes (understanding their nature, role, and significance) and how they exist as a specific type of cause, in this context, in an indirect way, through inquiry and understanding, we can speak about a material cause as if it exists as the term of a direct act of understanding and hence, as a cause which is to be correlated with presences of intelligibly which, in turn, are to be equated with presences of form. Every cause, in some way, is to be viewed as a reason or an applicable explanation of some kind and so, in this way, by a species of adaptation that we make when we speak about the proper causality of material causes, we can say that all these causes – whether material causes, formal, efficient, and final – all of them can be viewed as specifications of intelligibility which are to be equated with specifications of form. Cf. Conversation with Anthony Russo, December 15, 2012.

First mental operations conclude with a direct act of human understanding which grasps a form (knows about a form within a set of material conditions), and through the mediation of this form or other forms (functioning as an intelligible order or likeness of things and not as a sensible order or likeness of things), in and through our acts of understanding, as human beings we begin to know about realities or things that exist outside ourselves (beyond what is known by our acts of sense and the consciousness that exists in our acts of sense).⁶⁴ Through form, something outside our minds comes to exist within our minds in an immaterial way.⁶⁵ In the kind of language which Aquinas uses, a form or species “assimilates the intellect to the nature of its object.”⁶⁶ In learning about the nature of some other object which previously had been sensed in its externality, we also learn about a kind of existence or being that this other object can possibly have or enjoy (an existence which refers to possible real existence).

With respect now to how we might speak about different kinds of forms, by knowing about the existence of different kinds of potencies, we already have an initial understanding about what can be said about the existence of different kinds of forms. By first attending to potencies, we can begin to know something about forms. Potencies cannot be adequately understood if we do not refer to how every potency is directed or orientated toward the possible reception of a form which is suited to it or which is properly connatural to it. From an understanding of potencies, we can speak about forms and we can distinguish forms (one kind from another) although, on the other hand, if we choose to begin from the principle of form and the intellectual consciousness which exists in knowing anything about forms (form functioning as *the principle of intelligibility*), we can speak about differences of intelligibility which can be translated into differences that can exist with respect to potencies. This

63Recall here what Lonergan says in *Insight*, p. 534, where he says that “potency is capacity to come under law and form is being under law and act is according to law.” If law exists as an intelligibility (if it exists as the term of an act of direct understanding whether we want to speak about human acts of understanding or divine acts of understanding, and if we admit that law exists as an ordering of intelligible variables), then, on this basis, we can say that form as an ordering of intelligible variables is to be equated with law as an ordering of intelligibility. Only a verbal distinction distinguishes law from form. The absence of a real distinction points to the centrality of form as a metaphysical principle which exists in tandem with other metaphysical principles and which has a meaning that is determined by how it is related to the metaphysical principles which are present in potency and act. If, according to the traditional phrasing, being is divided by potency and act (*ens dividitur per potentiam et actum*), form functions as the essential middle term. Transitions occur in movements that go from potency to act through the mediation which exists and as this is found in the intelligibility of form. If we understand something according to its form, we also understand why the intelligibility of a given form limits what kind of act of existence can be properly received by it in any kind of transition which would move from form to act (a transition which would exist as a species of transition that moves from potency to act).

64*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2.

65*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2, ad 1.

66William E. Murnion, “The Meaning and Import of Aquinas’s Philosophy of Mind,” (paper presented at the Second International Lonergan Workshop, Regis College, Toronto, August 1-6, 2004), p. 21. As, in his own way, Peter Kreeft paraphrases it in his *A Summa of the Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologica Edited and Explained for Beginners* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 115, n. 80: “the thing known *is* (exists) in the knower, i.e., the same form exists first individuated by matter in the object and then abstracted from matter, as a universal, in the mind of the knower.”

kind of potency is not this other kind of potency because it is not disposed, it cannot receive a given kind of form. However, despite any approach that we might begin to use here (and as has been already noted), form enjoys a primacy which cannot be taken away from it since we cannot distinguish one kind of potency from another unless we have reasons which can serve as an adequate explanation. Each species or kind of potency is distinguished from every other species or kind of potency on the basis of different kinds of form and then too, on the basis of different kinds of forms, differing sets or different kinds of activities can be distinguished from each other. Some activities can be regarded as proper and others as not proper or as not essential. An act or an operation, for instance, can be performed by a human being (an act of digestion, for instance) and, to help explain it, we can turn to the presence of a biological nature (a nature which refers to biological laws).⁶⁷ But, in addition, other acts or operations can also occur and, for an adequate explanation of them, we must turn to other kinds of intellectual nature which are determinative if, for instance, a given act or operation is to be regarded as a properly human act.⁶⁸ In the words which Lonergan uses to enunciate a general principle which knows about the central purpose or function of form: “potency is capacity to come under law and form is being under law and act is according to law.”⁶⁹ Potencies aside, intelligibilities cannot be distinguished from each other if we are not able to refer to the presence or the possible relevance of an intelligibility that is able to distinguish between different sets or different kinds of intelligibility (this intelligibility as other than this other kind of intelligibility).

In speaking then about different kinds of forms and how we can distinguish one kind of form from another, a useful point of departure recalls the fact that every form *as an intelligibility* is known to the degree that it exists as the term of a direct act of understanding. Within the cognitive order of things, form exists *most properly* as the term of a direct act of understanding. No act of sense is able to directly apprehend it or to directly know about it since a form is what it is as a form because it exists as the term of an act of meaning which exist as an act of understanding. And, as has been noted (in

67Please note, however, that no form (of itself) is able to fully explain why a given act or operation occurs in the life of a given living thing. Relative to the being of any act or operation, form exists as a potency and nothing which exists as a potency is able to realize itself. Hence, in any explanations which would be given when anyone apprehends the reasons or the *ratio* that exists in a form, an adequate explanation would have to refer to the presence of other kinds of acts or other kinds of operations which exercise an influence that causes a given act or activity to occur. No adequate explanation can be given if we only attend to the presence of a form and the kind of act (the first act) which exists when a set of material conditions is informed by an intelligibility which refers to the presence of a particular form. Prior to the *reception* of any kind of form as a *distinct act*, other kinds of acts also need to be identified if, in understanding the existence of certain things or the occurrence of certain events, we are to have explanations which are to be more complete.

68*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 1, a. 1; 3a, q. 19, a. 2. Not all acts performed by human beings rank as truly human acts because a human act which truly exists is something that has been pondered and thought about. It exists as the fruit of one's moral deliberation and the making of a rational choice. Reason (or, in other words, understanding and judgment) convert actions that exist merely as actions or outer acts into acts which truly and properly exist as human actions. *Homo maxime est mens hominis*. A man, a human being, is principally his or her mind. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 29, a. 4, as cited by Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., “The Origin and Scope of Bernard Lonergan’s *Insight*,” *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), p. 27.

69Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 534.

language which partially recalls the language of Aquinas), every direct act of understanding reduces an experience of multiplicity into an experience of unity (we move from an experience of sensible multiplicity to a consciousness which knows about inner intelligible unities even if we have yet to know if a given intelligible unity exists as a truth or reality or if it does not exist as a truth or reality). *Intelligere enim est multa per unum apprehendere* [it is the mark of intelligence to apprehend unity in multiplicity].⁷⁰ The supra-experiential unity which thus exists within our intellectual consciousness (as this unity is mediated to us through the reception of an explanatory form given in an act of direct understanding) is not to be confused with any unity which can be known as a datum of our sensing consciousness (a unity which is mediated to us through possible receptions that can be given us as forms which refer to experiences of descriptive, sensible forms).⁷¹ A sensibly experienced unity which

⁷⁰Bernard Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, eds. Michael G. Shields, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 82-83.

⁷¹Beyond a sensible form which can be experienced in an inquiry that yearns for an experience of understanding, a sensible form which exists as a central or substantial form can be distinguished if we want to speak about an aesthetic species of unity which exists as an externalized descriptive form which can be expressed in some way. An apt example presents itself to us if we think about the notations of a musical score. When, later on, a score is played (when it is put into act or brought into a fullness of being which exists in its musical performance), a melody or rhythm of some kind is received from without and this melody or rhythm (in act) joins many different sounds into a oneness that distinguishes one piece of music from another. A melody or movement is remembered through a living patterning of sound which, as a pattern, is originally derived from an ordering of notes which, proleptically, had existed on some kind of flat surface as this is given or rendered when we think about the inscribed text of a musical score. In this case, an empirical species of unity is known through a sensible substantial central form which we can perceive through the acts of sense that are present in the inspection and reading which we do when we look at a flat surface before anything is performed and heard through the sensing which we do in the hearing which we can do. Bodily unities are perceived through acts of sense which refer to sensible descriptive central forms.

However, if we want to speak about differences or variations in sound which can occur as a recognizable piece of music is played now at this time and now at this other time, now in this context and now in this other context, or now with this set of instruments or this other set of instruments, then we refer to sensible forms which exist as accidental sensible forms (descriptive conjugate forms). Sounds of different tones come and go for reasons that have to do with other sensible conditions and the influence that can be exercised by other sensible conditions. If we look at musical instruments in general, musical instruments differ from one another since each species or type of instrument has a physical shape or a configuration which produces a characteristic sound. From a characteristic shape, we have a characteristic sound. And then too, if we look at a given class of instrument (if, for instance, we look at the general class of violins), we find differences in sound (however slightly at times) as we go from one given violin to another. In looking at violins, we find slight differences in the physical form or shape of a given violin and these differences, at a sensible level, explain why a given instrument has a sound which is particular to it. Each instrument is shaped by a slightly different material form which is directly sensed or which can be directly sensed before any questions can be asked which might want to move from an order of meaning that is grounded in description toward an order of meaning which thinks about understanding. In working with a given instrument or with a given assembly of instruments, the playing of any given piece of music will always be limited by the

refers to a pattern in a given experience of sense data is not an intellectually experienced unity which refers to some kind of explanation that can be understood to exist within data even as we know and admit (through our self-understanding) that sensibly known unities can serve as helpful points of departure for further movements which can occur within the ambit of our human cognition: movements within our cognition which can take us toward unities that can only be known by us through the sublation which occurs in our human cognition as we move from acts of sense toward acts of direct understanding and the understanding which is received in our direct acts of understanding.⁷² In a context of inquiries and questions that yearn for experiences of understanding, experiences of data are put into a form or a pattern which exists as a specification and also as a precondition. We refer to species of sensible form or pattern which are determined by our cognitive desires and the function of our cognitive desires.⁷³

For an example which illustrates how experiences of sensible unity can lead to later experiences of

kind of instruments which are at hand and which we could be using and by the differences which exist among individual instruments when we attend to a given class of instrument. Similarly also, the same sort of thing can be said about human voices and the differences which exist as we move from one human voice to another. Differing physical conditions limit or determine what kind of sound can be made here at this time and now at this other time. In conjunction with these factors, other sets of external conditions can also be attended to: external conditions which refer to other accidental sensible forms as these may exist in a given context and which affect what kind of sound can be produced here at this time and now at this other time if a piece of music is to be played or rendered in some way for others to enjoy. Atmospheric conditions stand, for instance, as one prominent example. As we move from one set of physical or material conditions to another set of physical or material conditions, we find different sensible configurations among these conditions even if we find that these differences do not appear to be too major. And yet, in saying this, we must admit that some accidental sensible differences can occasion some major differences in what happens when pieces of music are played or songs are sung. The degree of difference depends on what differences exist in the constitution of many sensible conjugate forms.

⁷²Experiencing or hearing a melody or song is to be contrasted with random experiences of sound which come across to us as noise because, in noise, no pattern or relation joins bits of sound in a formula or rhythm which converts bits of sounds into a harmony. This absence of a pattern explains why noise cannot be so easily reproduced through a rendering of sound which can faithfully render all the sounds which had once been heard. In all great works of art, a form of sensible patterning tends to provoke an affective response of some kind in human beings as a given pattern enters into the consciousness of a sensing human subject. Apprehensions of beauty in physical form point to experiences of goodness and truth (they point to the possible reality of certain truths and the virtue of certain good actions which could be put into effect by us within the context of our own lives) – facts and deeds which were not initially known by us through our prior acts of understanding or judgment but which we can come to know (indirectly) through a raising and a heightening of affective consciousness as this is stirred within us through artistic presentations of one kind or another. A raising and heightening of our consciousness elicits a change in our desires as new desires can begin to move us toward new ends or goals in a shift of direction and a change of our personal orientation. A change of focus occurs in what we are interested in and in how we might fasten onto new goals, purposes, and objectives.

⁷³In various texts, Lonergan speaks about the presence or the formation of intellectually determined patterns of experience. Cf. *Insight*, pp. 457-459; p. 468.

intelligible unity which, as unities, refer to forms, we can recall the experience of Galileo Galilei who, in the late 16th Century, noticed that hailstones of different weights struck the ground at about the same time.⁷⁴ With respect to the free fall of falling objects, according to received views as these had descended from the natural philosophy of Aristotle, bodies of greater weight should fall to a position of rest on the ground with greater speed than bodies of lesser weight. A physical law of motion says here that bodies fall to the ground with speeds that are direct vary according to the measure of their weights. The greater the weight, the faster should be the fall. Hence, on the basis of this proposed theorem which had been accepted as a species of self-evident truth, it should be the case that bodies of lighter weight should fall to a position of rest on the ground after bodies of greater weight have first reached the ground. A ball, for instance, weighing one hundred pounds should fall one hundred times faster than a ball of the same diameter weighing one pound. But, in his observations, Galileo could not find that these anticipations could be confirmed. Hence, weight does not appear to be a factor in determining what can be known about the speed of falling objects as they strike the earth's surface. But, for the sake of understanding, in order to have a better understanding (a true understanding), what exists as the determining factor? What are the determining factors which should be identified and how are they to be determined? How are they to be known?

From the posing of these questions and by attending to how Galileo tried to find answers for the questions that he was posing, we accordingly find a new methodology in the kind of scientific inquiry which Galileo undertook and, in these changes of procedure, we find a new science (the birth of a new science of physics in terms of how questions are posed and how solutions are to be sought). To obtain measurements of distance and time which could be recorded, Galileo developed new instruments. In a controlled laboratory context, he constructed inclined planes that could slow the fall of rolling balls through given lengths of space and, to determine lapses of time for falling movements, he used half-second musical beats to measure shorter elapses of time. By correlating measurements of distance and time, from an order which was then suggested by a pattern that presented itself within the notations of Galileo's data,⁷⁵ Galileo was able to conclude that “the distance a ball rolls increases with the square of the elapsed time” or so, from this, he was able to say that $d = 1/2at^2$.⁷⁶ To explain the nature of the free fall of falling objects, we can refer to a relation between variables which has been determined in a manner which differs from any kind of relation which refers to how variables relate to our individual acts of sense. Though our acts of sense, we can describe how things appear or seem to us as we do our

⁷⁴Stillman Drake, *Galileo* (Reading: Cox and Wyman Limited, 1980), p. 22.

⁷⁵From the imagery that exists in notations that record measurements of distance and time, a direct but intelligible relation can be grasped: a relation which indicates that objects fall with a constantly accelerating speed as they traverse any given number of distances. If, in one second, an object falls 4.9 meters; in two seconds, it will not fall 9.8 meters (4.9 meters times 2) but 19.6 meters; and in three seconds, it will fall 44.1 meters and not a lesser distance if we assume that the speed of fall is what it is after only two seconds. A constant rate of acceleration can be determined and it is determined when we discover a pattern that can be mathematically expressed: after every second, an object is falling faster by a rate of increase which speaks about an additional 32 feet per second per second or 9.8 meters per second per second. In other words, at the end of every second, the speed has increased by an additional 32 feet per second (9.8 meters per second).

⁷⁶Larry Gonick and Art Huffman, *The Cartoon Guide to Physics* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), p. 14. Please note that Galileo did not represent his findings in the terms which we find within the text of this particular equation. Galileo's correlations are presented in the context of a later development in mathematics. Cf. Byrne, “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” p. 31.

sensing in a given context at a given time with a particular focus. But, by using standards of measurement which serve as an external rule for gathering and assembling data, data can be known in terms of how one species of data relates to another species of data. We move away from the kind of order that exists in description (which is known in description) toward the order which exists in explanation (which is known in explanation).⁷⁷ As Aquinas would say in the kind of language which he would use in the context of his day, we move from a set of external accidents toward a set of internal accidents: accidents which do not exist within our acts of sense but which exist within our acts of understanding.⁷⁸ In our desire for an understanding of things which has ceased to exist as a function of individual standpoints or individual viewpoints, we are no longer limited to the kind of relation which exists if we tend to think about how things are known by us in terms of how they relate to ourselves (to our various acts of sensing). Instead of a datum of sense that is used as the gist or the sum of a proffered, possible explanation (an experience of heaviness which refers to the weight of one ball in comparison in comparison to the weight of another ball), we now refer to a datum which exists within an act of direct understanding and this same datum as it has come to exist for us as a conceptualized word: a word which refers to the terms of a mathematical equation which has joined a number of variables into a relation where the relation specifies a meaning which can now be communicated to ourselves and others. In the kind of language which we find in Aquinas and which can also be found in Galileo, we can say that an order of proportion has been specified: an order of proportion that relates measurements of distance and time with each other in a manner which speaks about an inner relation that exists between distance and time as this order is in turn related to the fall of any kind of falling object that could be falling near the surface of the earth. From a sensible form that has been experienced or imagined, descriptive conjugates or descriptive correlatives have been replaced by an order of conjugates or correlatives which exist as explanatory conjugates (explanatory correlatives). Unseen variables existing in an unseen but understood relation explain why a given event occurs within the data or range of our sense experience; they can also explain why, within the data or range of our sense experience, a given being happens to act in the way that it happens to behave through the activities which it does and the activities which it receives; and, lastly, they can also explain why different beings relate to each other in a recurrent fashion (the recurrence refers to the presence of an

⁷⁷As Patrick Byrne notes in his paper on “Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” p. 375, if we think about the order of description which exists in our cognitive consciousness and which specifically refers to how things are understood in terms of how they relate to our acts of sensing, this thinking of ours exists not as a datum of our sensing consciousness but as a datum of our inquiring, inquisitive consciousness. In our thinking and understanding (through our self-reflection), we discover that a relation exists between our acts of sensing and the terms of our acts of sensing. This relation is not discovered (it is not known) by us through any of our acts of sense. It is known through an act of understanding (through our self-understanding) although, in this self-understanding, we should also realize that, in the empirical consciousness which we have of things that are other than ourselves, we tend to think about things not in terms of how they relate to our senses but in terms of how they resemble some kind of sensible form that we have previously experienced and known. Something is allegedly known (it is allegedly understood) if we can somehow picture it or imagine it (having a shape or form which we can somehow interiorly visualize). Cf. Byrne, p. 376. If we can have an image or picture of some kind that we can recall or apply in a particular context, we tend to believe that nothing more needs to be understood. All meaning is given. As Byrne argues in his own words: “the sensible components of descriptive meanings tend to dominate the ways we think about them.” Cf. Byrne, p. 375.

⁷⁸*De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 6, ad 2; *Summa Theologiae* 2a-2ae, q. 8, a. 1 & ad 3.

intelligibility which is known if we can speak about an order of relations amongst elements which exists within a given form).⁷⁹

To sum up at this point, as a specification of form (as a species of form which refers to an explanatory conjugate form and not a descriptive conjugate form), explanatory conjugate forms refer to an ordering of meaning which can be applied to a given thing (the life which exists with respect to the life of a given thing) or an ordering of meaning which exists among different things (the life which exists in the interaction which exists among a number of different things). By their being understood, these conjugates enter into our cognitive awareness and they become a part of our conscious awareness (referring to our implicit consciousness or sense of self as a knowing human subject) as this cognitive awareness emerges from acts of understanding that has been duly received and experienced by us at a given time in a given place. Only a conceptual distinction distinguishes a direct act of understanding from a form which is known by us through an idea or meaning which exists as the term of direct acts of understanding.

To understand a bit better the kind of unity which thus exists with respect to the kind of unity which exists within an explanatory conjugate form, we can return and think again about what happens when, by a direct act of understanding, we move from experiences of sense data to a meaning which knows about the possible existence of an explanatory conjugate form. In the shift which occurs in this context, we move from varying experiences of sense to an intelligible unity that transcends all the shifts and variations which we find in our acts of sense and in the accompanying data of sense. It is a commonly accepted teaching here that the “haziness of data” is to be contrasted with the kind of clarity which exists in our human knowing whenever, in our intellectual consciousness, we come to grasp or know something about the meaning of a conjugate form. The intelligibility of a conjugate form is something which tends to endure or hold (it exists as a correlative: correlative of one single direct act of understanding) despite the constant shifting and moving which commonly attends whatever is being experienced by us through our human acts of sensing. A stability exists with respect to the meaning of a conjugate form which does not exist with respect to the terms of our acts of sense (since our acts of sensing are intrinsically conditioned by the presence of material conditions: by variations and changes as we find these amid concrete circumstances of space and time). Admittedly, yes, if our acts of sense encounter patterns in sense data which do not verify the truth of a meaning which exists in a proffered conjugate form, then, as a consequence, new questions should be asked in an inquiry which can look for a new meaning that can exist if, by a new act of direct understanding, we can come to know about the possible existence or the new meaning of a new conjugate form. However, before any thought is given to the requirements of judgment and the need for a distinct kind of inquiry which can move from apprehensions that understand forms toward judgments and affirmations of fact and act (by act, we refer to the reality of a given form), we can rightly argue that, relative to acts of sense, an act of direct understanding which knows about a conjugate form is an act that is detached from variations which occur at a lower level of cognition and at a lower level of being (a lower level of cognition which refers to our acts of sense and what is directly known by our acts of sense).⁸⁰ Acts and terms of sense come

⁷⁹Byrne, “Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” p. 378.

⁸⁰If, as a consequence of our self-understanding, we conclude that being is intrinsically intelligible (being is defined by the presence of meaning: meaning as the presence of intelligibility), then, legitimately, we cannot think or speak in terms of a correlation which should exist between experiences of sense data, on the one hand, and apprehensions of being or reality, on the other hand. Quite the contrary, by experiences of sense and through acts of understanding, we move toward being.

and go but much less is this the case if we think about our acts of direct understanding which know about the possible existence or the meaning of a conjugate form (a conjugate form which could truthfully exist as a reality and which can be known as a truth or reality if, through the being of a subsequent later act of reflective understanding, we can speak about the real being of a conjugate form in contrast with a hypothetical or an ideational kind of being which refers to a conjugate form as this is known simply within a direct act of understanding). If we experiment with our acts of sense and our acts of understanding, we can change our acts of sense seemingly at will. But, with respect to our acts of understanding, we cannot simply change our acts of understanding. We can try to ask new questions but, prior to the reception of any new acts of understanding, we cannot know if the reception of a new act of understanding will change what we have come to know through the reception of a prior act of understanding.

If a unity is experienced whenever a conjugate form is known as the term of an act of direct understanding, another kind of intelligible unity presents itself if, by a different set of questions, we want to understand why the meaning of conjugate forms suggests the presence of another kind of meaning (another kind of intelligibility) which presents itself as a necessary presupposition (if the meaning of differing conjugate forms is to be more fully understood within a given context). Employing a brief and telling example that is adapted from argumentation which can be found in the teaching of Aquinas:⁸¹ if we say, for instance, that sight refers to a conjugate form which refers to the meaning or the intelligibility of sight as a potency for possible acts of seeing and if we also say that the potency which is being understood through the conjugate form of sight is a bodily organ of some kind which refers to a physical pair of eyes, we might well ask about what kind of form is needed if we want to understand a species of potency which does not refer to anything which could possibly exist as a part or an element of something else but which instead refers to what could possibly exist as a unity, whole, or totality to which a number of conjugate forms can possibly refer. The would be unity, whole, or totality would include potentialities or it would refer to potencies which cannot exist apart from the presence of something which exists as unity, whole, or totality and, at the same time, we would say that a given unity, whole, or totality would exist in a way which sets it apart from potentialities that are not able to exist on their own as a species of unity, whole, or totality.⁸² At the level of sense, we notice that bodily eyes do not normally exist apart from a body to which the eyes belong. And then, if we go on to

We move toward reality. In our acts of sensing, we do not know anything about being. The being or reality of things has yet to be discovered (it has yet to be understood and known by us in our acts of cognition).

⁸¹*Summa Theologiae* 1a, q. 75, a. 2, ad 2. In the kind of argument which one can find in Aquinas: the meaning of something which exists as a part is to be distinguished from the meaning of something else which does not exist as a part. One cannot speak about a meaning for part unless one refers to a meaning that refers to a whole. Meanings for whole and part define each other as one attempts to distinguish one from the other.

⁸²Recall the difference which exists between a conjugate potency and a central potency. A central potency refers to a potency which is to be understood as as orientation or an openness that is receptive to what could exist as a whole or a totality. But, in contrast, a conjugate potency is receptive not to what could exist as a whole or totality but to what could exist in a manner which somehow participates in a whole or totality. If something cannot possibly exist as a whole or totality, if it is possible for it to exist in any kind of way, it must exist as some kind of participant, belonging to what could possibly exist as a whole or totality. To the degree that it exists, it exists within something which is other than itself. It cannot exist apart or independently of that other.

say that it is possible for eyes to see shapes and colors, it is also possible for us to say that, through its open seeing eyes, a living being can see certain shapes and colors which are being seen through its open seeing eyes. Hence, yes, eyes see when they are doing what they are supposed to be doing in their acts of seeing (if light is present as a condition of possibility) but, in a more primary way, it is a living subject who sees through the body which it happens to have and through the eyes which belong to its body. No eye can see anything by itself (independently of its existing or belonging to a given living being). In the same way thus, as Aquinas notes, no hand can feel anything by itself (independently of its existing or belonging to a given living being). Something other sees through eyes which function as instrumental causes as, in the same way, something other feels through hands which similarly function as instrumental causes. Separate hands or eyes from a living body and we have hands or eyes that can no longer function as hands or eyes. The difference which thus exists between a possible center of activity and reception and any possible act which could come from this center moving outwards or which could move toward this center (through some external means or instrument) accordingly explains why, in our understanding of forms, we must move from the intelligible unity that exists within a conjugate form toward an intelligible unity which exists apart from any conjugate form.⁸³ By this means, we understand the meaning of conjugate forms in a more comprehensive fashion and, at the same time, we move toward a knowledge that can speak about the existence of a second species of form. In understanding conjugate forms, we move toward an understanding of central forms and, conversely, we can move from a possible understanding that knows about a central form toward a further possible understanding which refers to new conjugate forms which can now be understood.

In distinguishing thus between the oneness which is present within an explanatory conjugate form and the oneness which exists within an explanatory central form, a central form, as it is understood,⁸⁴ exists

83Recall how W. Norris Clarke refers to a substance by way of a meaning and definition which speaks about “a center of acting and being acted on.” Cf. Clarke, *The One and the Many*, p. 129. This type of being (which Clarke refers to as a “substance” but which Lonergan refers to in *Insight* as a “thing”) “is intrinsically oriented toward expressing and fulfilling itself through its operations and relations of giving-receiving with others.”

84In his *Insight*, pp. 460-463, Lonergan speaks about “two general kinds of form.” For pedagogical reasons, he first speaks about explanatory conjugate forms before he speaks about explanatory central forms although, if we choose to adopt a different pedagogy, we can try first to speak about central forms before then speaking about the meaning of conjugate forms. As Lonergan later notes in his *Understanding and Being*, p. 211: “it is understanding the same data from different viewpoints that leads to the two types of form.” Hence, if we were to begin with a possible understanding of central forms before moving to an understanding of conjugate forms, it is obvious that, within the world of our experience, we will encounter very many things which we initially sense as bodies. But, as we move toward acts of understanding that can distinguish between the presence of a body and the presence of thing, we can then begin to speak about conjugate forms which explain why it is possible to speak about variations which exist in the life of a given thing or substance. We move beyond discussions which, initially, were only able to deal with variations as these exist with respect to the life and activity of a body. In the shift which occurs and which knows about the difference which exists between a central form and a conjugate form, a real distinction becomes known (a real difference which exists between the mere or simple being of a thing and a being which also exists as a potency for activities which differ from the activity of mere being or mere existing). Now, at this time and not possibly at this other time, a given thing (as a subject) is able to do this act or this that act and now, at

not only as the term of another species of direct act of understanding but, as an instance of possible being, this same form also refers to the possible existence of a thing or substance.⁸⁵ In the language which Lonergan uses (as this is derived from his analysis of human cognition), a substance or thing exists as a “unity-identity-whole.”⁸⁶ It is understood to exist as “unity-identity-whole.” As has been noted, conjugate forms are more fully understood (they can be more fully understood) if we can work from the meaning of a central form. Without central forms, we cannot speak about the meaning of any conjugate forms or an order which can exist among these forms because the intelligibility of a conjugate form exists as an intelligibility only to the degree that it inheres within the meaning or the intelligibility which refers to the meaning of a central form (a form which, as noted, strictly refers to the nature of a thing or the nature of a substance).⁸⁷ If central or substantial forms refer to the possible

this other time and not at some other time, it is also able to receive the influence of this act here or the influence of this act there.

85Please note that, if the meaning of a thing refers to what happens when a central form is joined to a central potency, if a thing refers to a union which exists between a central form and a central potency, then, in this understanding, we have a meaning which is to be identified with Aristotle's understanding of substance. For Aristotle, a substance exists whenever we can speak about a union which exists between a substantial form and an instance of matter which receives this kind of form (an instance of matter which we can speak about as an instance of substantial potency if we want to use the kind of language that Aristotle would approximately use in explicating the kind of meaning which he wants to speak about in the context of his metaphysical analysis). In Aristotle, substances are not spoken about in a way which explicitly refers to acts of being or acts of existence which are to be regarded as constitutive principles (constitutive principles which would allow one to speak about a real difference or real distinction that would exist between a real substance and a hypothetical substance). It was only later, through a further development which can be found in the metaphysics of Aquinas, that it becomes possible to speak about substances in a way that directly refers to them in terms of potency, form, and act and not simply, as before, in terms simply of potency and form (as Lonergan would speak about these matters: central potency, central form, and central act versus central potency and central form).

86*Insight*, p. 271.

87By referring thus to a meaning which refers to a thing or substance (existing as a “unity-identity-whole”), as has been already suggested, we better understand, for instance, what is meant if we want to speak about a form or the intelligibility of our eyes and hands. In thinking about the nature or the respective conjugate forms of our eyes and hands, what we have is a form which only truly exists as an intelligibility if it inheres in the meaning or the intelligibility which refers to the meaning of a central form (a form which thus refers to the nature of a thing or the nature of a substance). Hence, in saying that one kind of being refers to a being which only exists to the degree that it exists in something other than itself (for instance, an act of understanding only exists in a knowing subject and it does not exist independently of a knowing subject), by implication, we can say that a second kind of being needs to be properly distinguished: a being (substance or thing) whose oneness is such that we can speak about a *unum per se*: a thing that is in itself one. Cf. *Insight*, p. 462; p. 773. While a substance or thing is related to other beings or other things and its existence is conditioned by the being or existence of other things (other substances), it exists not by being within something else but by somehow existing on its own in conjunction with other beings or other things.

Within theology, for example, we can say about Christ's oneness that he is the same being who was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary and who later suffered, died, and rose from the dead and that he is

existence of a thing or a substance (we recall how Aristotle equated substances with essences) and if, by means of central or substantial forms we can come to know about the existence of unity-identity-wholes which exist as centers of activity and reception, then, through conjugate or accidental forms, we come to know about normative laws: a possible presence of normative laws which point to laws of nature (laws of one kind or another which are constitutive of the immanent intelligibility which belongs to the different activities and receptions of act which belong to the life of given things or given substances).⁸⁸ Through conjugate, accidental forms, we understand acts, operations, and events which refer to who or what is doing something as an efficient cause and who or what is being acted upon by something else which is other. When we speak about central forms or substantial forms, we attend or we refer to unities which are to be identified with the possible being of things or substances and when we speak about conjugate forms or accidental forms, we attend to the acts or operations of things or substances as these can be understood in terms which refer to possible presences of law (we think about the laws of nature which are constitutive of the immanent intelligibility which exists when we think about presences of operation or presences of event).⁸⁹

Within this context, in seeking to know about the kind of unity which refers to the intelligible unity of a central form, in the order of human cognition, a prospective direct act of understanding is confronted initially with an assembly of disparate data. The contents of this data can refer to an assembly of different conjugate forms. However, if a higher unity or order is to be grasped by a new, explanatory direct act of understanding, if a point of convergence can be detected in a manner which can refer to a new intelligibility which points to the presence of an object which can also exist as a species of active and receptive subject (doing this act now and this other act at another time and receiving this other act

also the same being who exists as the second person of the Blessed Trinity. By way of an analogical transference of meaning, it can be said that Christ's oneness refers to Christ's substantial being: who Christ is in his primary intelligibility. If we want to speak about Christ as having a central form, we can say that this form refers to Christ's divinity as Son of God. And then, from the viewpoint of this divinity, we can talk about the assumption of a human nature. Christ, as a divine being, assumes a human nature without in any way losing his essential divinity. A divine person becomes a human person but only because or in light of the fact that a divine person is able to become a human person without in any way ceasing to be fully and properly divine. The nature which is assumed by Christ can be regarded as possibly another central form (a form that refers to Christ's humanity). If we want to talk about Christ as a human being, then we can properly speak about a central form which refers to Christ's humanity. But, because Christ exists as a being who is more than just a man (another human being), as we move from talk about beings that are proportionate to our human acts of experiencing, understanding, and judging, we will then find that we can no longer speak within a context of meaning that is determined by a metaphysics of proportionate being. But, what is known about a metaphysics of proportionate being becomes a basis for an analogical species of metaphysics that is more suited for discussions that would want to talk about beings which enjoy a transcendent form of existence. If a real distinction exists between the form and act of any given thing and if a real distinction also thus exists between the central form and the central act of any given thing, we can speak about the reality of Christ's oneness in a way which manages to transcend anything that can be said about the presence of any kind of nature that is distinct. Christ's oneness is not explained by any oneness of form but, rather or in a better way, by Christ's oneness in terms of act.

⁸⁸Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 39, citing Lonergan, "Thought and Reality," course of lectures, Thomas More Institute, Montreal, 1946. See Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, p. 204.

⁸⁹Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 39.

now and this other act at this other time), then we can speak about a new species of intelligible unity which not only transcends any variations as these are given in acts or data of sense but which also transcends any variations as these are given within direct acts of understanding that know about the possible existence of explanatory conjugate forms which differ from each other. A higher unity, as an explanation, refers to the presence of a substantial or essential form.⁹⁰ It refers to the presence of a central form and, as noted, a substantial, essential, or central form refers to the nature or the intelligibility of a thing or the nature or intelligibility of a substance.⁹¹ When an essence simply refers to what something is apart from any other meaning which refers to anything other, an essence can be understood as a traditional designation for what we mean when we want to speak about the presence of a central form (or the presence of a substantial form). An essence of this kind is to be distinguished from a qualified species of essence which refers to conjugate forms which can only be understood (they can only be adequately understood) if we refer to another meaning which specifies or which refers to a proper context of meaning.⁹² The meaning of a circle cannot be understood, for example, if we do not refer to the meaning of a plane surface.⁹³ The meaning of a circle potentially lies within the meaning of a plane surface although, admittedly, we cannot deduce the meaning of a circle from the meaning of a plane surface. Similarly, when we speak about the snubness of a nose, we speak about a quality which cannot be understood if we refrain from speaking about the meaning of a nose. Qualified kinds of essences can be spoken about because we can speak about another species of essence which exists as pure or simple essences.⁹⁴ Their meaning can be spoke about without our having to refer to the presence of any other meaning.

90In this context, it is said that Lonergan identifies the intelligibility, meaning, or essence of a soul with what is meant when speaking about the presence of a central form. Cf. Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, "Sanctifying Grace in a 'Methodical Theology'," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 70.

91See *Insight*, p. 462, where Lonergan notes that the difference between his notion of central form and Aristotle's talk about substantial form is "merely nominal." Generally speaking, in his terminology, Lonergan prefers to speak about "thing" while Aristotle prefers to speak about "substance." The conceptuality differs but not so the meaning if thing and substance both refer to a species of unity which refers to an internal intelligible oneness which does not refer to any kind of numerical designation. Instead of a species of physical or material oneness, we refer to an explanatory, intelligible oneness which is the oneness of a thing or the oneness of a substance: a oneness which explains why a thing or substance exists as it is and why it is able to do many different kinds of actions and also experience many different kinds of acts which come to it from without. This kind of intelligible unity which refers to a given thing can also exist as a oneness which belongs to many individual things. Each individual thing has an individual life of its own. But, in terms of the kind or species of substantial oneness which each has, each shares or participates in the same intelligible oneness. Human beings, for instance, all exist as human beings. A common humanity refers to a common substantial form which all human beings share in. The substantial or central form is received by a potency which exists as an instance of substantial or central potency. A substratum having material determinations can possibly become a specific kind of thing if it is informed with a central form that can turn it into a specific kind of thing. Cf. *Verbum*, p. 195: "form is what causes matter to be a thing." In the kind of language that Lonergan uses, we speak about a commonly shared central form. Each human being exists as a human being despite how much or how often each many differ in how a common humanity is being expressed at any one time or through any given periods of time.

92Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 142.

93Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 142; *Verbum*, p. 37, n. 120.

94Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 142.

For instance, by way of two examples, the “humanness” of a human being or the “dogginess” of a dog serves as an organizing principle for understanding everything which can be predicated about a given human being or an animal known as a dog.⁹⁵ “Humanness” and “dogginess” each refer to a central form (as a primary intelligibility) which serves as a point of departure for understanding everything that a given human being or dog is able to do as a subject and is also able to receive as a potency (as one moves from a central form to an apprehension which knows about different conjugate forms).⁹⁶ Hence, a being, whenever it exists as a certain kind of being (a certain kind of substance or a certain kind of thing), is able to do certain actions and it is also able to receive certain acts which are proper to it and, also, for the same reason, it is not able to do certain actions and it is not able to receive certain acts

⁹⁵Stewart, p. 161.

⁹⁶In the traditional conceptuality which has been used to speak about the “humanness” or humanity of human beings as the central form of human beings, it is said that the substantial form of a human being is the human soul. Hence, the union of a human soul with its body (a body that is made human though its union with a human soul) results in a human essence: a form as it exists within a body. The characteristic union of a human soul with its matter designates a human substance (a human being or a “human thing” if we want to use a technical form of designation that jars with non-technical forms of expression). The essence of a human being is defined by the union of a human soul with a materiality which is common to all human beings. The essence of a human being is thus not defined by the union of a human soul with a particular set of bones and flesh as this exists with respect to a particular human being although, if we want to understand why this set of bones and flesh is to be regarded as a human being and not some other kind of being, we would normally refer to a meaning which refers to what a human being is as a concrete universal. We would refer to an essence which has been defined when we have moved from an answer which responds to a question about why this set of bones and flesh (this specific body) is to be regarded as a human being to an answer which responds to a differently worded question which asks for a meaning or a definition which can properly say what a human being is. In the transfer, a substantial form which is grasped by a direct act of understanding is converted into an essence or a substance that is known when, from a prior direct act of understanding, we move into a later act of conceptualization which, in two steps, takes an intelligibility which exists as the term of a prior direct act of understanding and then converts it into a universalized intelligibility (an articulate universally applicable meaning) which, as a concept or definition, is now inwardly joined to a universalized specification of matter (which exists for us as common matter according to a commonly known traditional designation). Cf. *Verbum*, p. 27: “grasping the cause is...but an insight into the sensible data [but] grasping the universal is the production of the inner word that expresses that insight.”

In the transition which thus moves from an awareness of a substantial or central form (the term of a direct act of understanding) to a meaning which exists equivocally either as a conceptualized essence or as a conceptualized substance, as a consequence of this species of conversion, we can understand why we can equate the being of a substantial form (the being of a central form) with either the being of an essence or the being of a substance which exists as the term of a direct act of understanding which directly answers a question which asks not about why something exists but about what a given thing happens to be (the whatness of a thing which refers to its quiddity). In Aristotle's understanding of substances, every substance (to the degree that it does not exist as an immaterial or separated substance) is composed of a union which exists between a substantial or a central form and a specification of common matter which, in Lonergan's conceptuality, we would refer to as an instance of

which would come from without.⁹⁷ Discursive reasoning activity properly belongs, for example, to whatever exists as a human being. But if, on the other hand, a human being were to behave in a way which would suggest that a given person is more of an animal than a human being, then the person involved would not be behaving in a way which reflects the meaning which is present when we speak about the central form of a human being and the presence of this central form.

The humanity of a human being *as a central form* orders the meaning of subordinate forms as these refer to the animality of animals and the vegetative nature of plants,⁹⁸ although, if we attend to the principle of animality as it exists apart from the humanity of any human being, what we have is a

central potency. In this context, every substance exists as an essence and vice versa. While some what questions can be immediately viewed as why questions, on some occasions however, if we are to have proper answers for our what questions, our what questions will require a reformulation that first turns them into why questions before any inquiries can be made which could lead us toward new direct acts of understanding. Cf. Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, pp. 147-148; *Understanding and Being*, p. 30, p. 32; *Phenomenology and Logic*, pp. 104-105; Novak, p. 200.

The necessity of occasionally converting what questions into why questions accordingly suggests that the asking of why questions differs from the asking of any what questions although, in trying to identify what kind of difference exists, an adequate response cannot argue that we should always speak about the presence of a real distinction. If we would like to speak about the possible absence of a real distinction, it is to be admitted that, from answers to why questions, we get our answers to what questions and so, in support of this position, Aquinas argues that, in both cases, whether we speak about the presence and the application of a form in our understanding (the form here refers to the presence of a substantial form) or the presence and application of an essence in our understanding, a real difference in intelligibility cannot be posited since, in both cases, a form which is known in its intelligibility is identical to the form that is also known in its intelligibility when we refer to the meaning of an essence (a meaning which exists as a concept or definition). Cf. Aquinas, *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 5, 10, 904: “something which is said to be can be understood by both of them” (my translation). Cf. *Verbum*, p. 29, n. 63. In attending to the relation which exists between acts of direct understanding and acts of conceptualization, it cannot be denied that, in acts of conceptualization, we can speak about prolongations of understanding which exist when we move from prior acts of direct understanding toward later acts of conceptualization.

On the other hand, however, although in a different way, we can speak about the presence of a real distinction: a presence which we can detect if we attend to the kind of distinction which Aquinas attempts to draw in order to speak about the difference which exists when we say that form is related to matter in a manner which resembles or corresponds with how a quiddity [an essence] is related to a supposit. Cf. *Verbum*, p. 29. The conceptuality which exists with respect what we say about form and matter is to be contrasted with the richer conceptuality which exists when we want to speak about how a quiddity or essence is related to what exists as a supposit. A quiddity or essence refers to a form which has been universalized in a manner which joins it to a universalized specification of matter. In moving from form to essence, meaning is added to what has existed as a distinct meaning when we had referred to the presence of a form. A supposit refers to something which exists in a manner which is not to be equated with the givenness of matter. We refer to a generic species of individual which is other than the specific individuality of individual beings.

meaning which refers to the presence of another species of central form.⁹⁹ The central form of an animal is not to be confused with the central form of a human being. In its intelligibility, an animal central form is not able to order or incorporate meanings within it which can only be ordered in a human way if we refer a human central form and the intelligibility which exists within this form or which is to be correlated with this form. If, in any given instance, a central form is not able to function as a chief principle of order; or, for instance, by way of example, if the humanity of a human being is not able to incorporate the intelligibility which belongs to the central form of an animal (the animality of an animal) and the central form which belongs to the vegetative life of a plant, then, it would cease to exist as a principle of intelligibility which can explain actions or activities that are proper to the life of human beings. While, yes, the sensing of an animal differs from the sensing of a human being in so

⁹⁷To avoid confusion, please note that, if we want to speak about any possible difference which can exist between the nature or the intelligibility of a substance or thing and the nature or intelligibility of a subject, a subject refers to a thing or substance (a unity-identity-whole) which is conscious. It is engaged in acts of experiencing, understanding, and judging. Cf. *Understanding and Being*, p. 156. Hence, if one wants to talk about a thing or substance apart from the presence of any consciousness in a thing or substance, then one only speaks about a thing or a substance. But, if one wants to talk about a presence of consciousness in a thing or substance, then one speaks about the reality of a subject. A subject is a conscious thing or a conscious substance. In Lonergan's own words: "the subject is a substance that is present to itself, that is conscious." Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, eds. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 83.

In order to speak about the intelligible unity of a conscious thing or conscious substance or, more appropriately and directly with regard to ourselves, if we want to speak about the intelligible unity which exists with respect to ourselves and if we want to speak about this unity in a way which refers to the presence of a central form, then, by attending to the performative unity which exists within our consciousness, we can refer to the meaning of a central form. Cf. Jacobs-Vandegeer, "Sanctifying Grace in a 'Methodical Theology'," p. 71. In other words, through a transposition of meaning which we can effect, if we want to move from a metaphysical way of speaking toward a way of speaking that is grounded in the data of our human consciousness, we refer to the consciousness of a subject (the unifying consciousness of a subject which refers to the consciousness of a whole) apart from any variations in subjectivity or consciousness which are induced or which are made present because a given person is the subject of different acts (now at this time or now at this other time) or because a subject receives now this act or now this other act or other operation. In the words of Jacobs-Vandegeer: "the unity of consciousness *reveals* the concrete, intelligible form of the whole person." Cf. Jacobs-Vandegeer, p. 71. An identity within consciousness is distinguished from a diversity that exists within consciousness.

⁹⁸See Lonergan, *Verbum*, pp. 202-203, where Lonergan argues that the human soul (the central form of a human being) possesses the perfection which belongs to the natures of sensitive and vegetative souls but without the imperfections which exist when we speak about these natures. As a subject, a human is able to do things that an animal or a plant is not able to do.

⁹⁹See how Joseph Bobik speaks about how we can distinguish between an essential relation between forms or predicates versus non-essential relations between forms or predicates (a non-essential relation which is commonly referred to as an accidental relationship or which can be referred to as an accidental predication). Cf. Joseph Bobik, *Aquinas on Being and Essence: A Translation and Interpretation* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), p. 39. As Bobik cites a

far as acts of human sensing occur in a context that is typically informed by interests and desires that are distinctly human, it cannot be denied too that, in human acts of sensing, we can find a meaning, nature, or intelligibility which is to be equated with what can be found in acts of sensing that belong to animals. Human acts of sense need to meet needs and requirements that are met by animal acts of sense before they can begin to meet needs that are distinctly human and which differ from any needs that are proper to the life of animals and which exist, more or less, at a biological level. As infant human beings move toward maturity in a gradual journey that takes them toward adulthood, acts of sense change in their configuration which they have with each other as, hopefully, they begin to exist to serve for higher purposes. A degree of animalism is transcended by a greater degree of humanity.

As has already been noted, what is known as the meaning or intelligibility of a central form refers to what is meant by a thing or substance and, like a conjugate form, what is known in this form is something which is not simply given as the term of an act of sense. It is understood and it can only be known if, in fact, it has been understood in a given direct act of understanding. To reiterate a previously noted difference, the unity which is present within a central form does not refer to any kind of physical, material, or bodily unity which can only be properly known through an act of sense (even as we admit that, from acts of sense, we can move toward acts of understanding which can know about meanings which properly refer to the existence of things or the existence of substances). Acts of sense give limited degrees of access to what could be meant by a thing or substance although, strictly speaking, no thing or substance can ever be given or known as the term of an act of sense (through an act of sense).¹⁰⁰

number of examples: Being a human being includes meanings which refer to being an animal but being an animal does not include meanings which necessarily refer to being a human being. Being a human being includes what is meant when we think about the meaning of a substance or thing (Lonergan prefers to speak about thing and not substance). But, being a substance or thing does not include meanings that necessarily refer to what it means to be a human being. Whiteness refers to a color but color refers to a meaning which, in turn, does not necessarily refer to whiteness as a color. Whiteness exists as an accident with respect to what could be white but the meaning about what is meant by an accident does not necessarily refer to what is signified by whiteness. If we want to speak about accidental relations among forms (accidental predications), we can say that no human being needs to be white in color and no experience of whiteness needs to refer to another human being. Being human does not mean that one is necessarily thin in shape and, conversely, experiences of thinness need not refer to the shape of any given human being. Whiteness does not necessarily refer to roundness and, again conversely, roundness does not necessarily refer to whiteness. Similarly, whiteness does not necessarily refer to humanity and, conversely, the presence of any humanity does not necessarily refer to the presence of any whiteness.

100In an example which can be culled from Lonergan's *Insight*, p. 271, Fido, the dog, can be known as a body when, at any given time, in one act of seeing, the sensible form of Fido's body is apprehended (it is received in one's act of sensing). However, it is possible to refer to Fido, the dog, in a context which refers to changes in Fido over time (Fido's development over time). Fido, as a distinct being, passes through a number of very different stages which extend from birth to death and, if we consider all these changes and if we try to refer all these changes to a single point of focus, unity, or principle, one moves from Fido as a body to Fido as a thing or a substance. Cf. Stewart, p. 162. Aspects of Fido can be seen (they can be sensed) at any given time. But, when all our information about Fido is gathered together in a way that transcends our acts of sense and the experience that we have of spatial temporal conjugates, we have knowledge about Fido as a thing. In this context, Fido is

To understand more about how one might better understand the difference between conjugate form and central form, we can attend to how these two notions of form explain change as change occurs within a world that is known by our proportionate acts of human experiencing, understanding, and knowing. As has been noted, conjugate forms (through a correlation of two or more variables) explain why certain events occur. A correlation given in one conjugate form specifies an inner law, an interior principle, which, to some extent, explains the nature or the meaning of a certain type of event. In the context of modern science, an internal relation which exists within a conjugate form can be rendered through a conceptuality which is given in a species of formulation which refers to the presentation of a differential equation. But, on the other hand, conjugate forms cannot explain change in terms which can refer to an experience and a presence of change that is intimately joined to another kind of experience or variable which refers to a presence of continuity and identity and which does not exist as a direct awareness of change. How, rationally, can we speak about something which, on the one hand, is always changing but which, on the other hand, is never ceasing to be what it has always been (what it happens to be)? How is change connected with an absence of change? Or, in other words, how is it possible to speak about change in a way which can set it apart from chaos or pandemonium in a manner which can refer to the presence of a real distinction? How is change to be understood in a manner which can speak about a proper intelligibility for change versus shifts or movements which appear to be totally lacking in any kind of intelligibility?

If we think then only about relations (how this variable connects with this other variable), then, in order to understand or grasp any relations which could possibly exist, we must always look for relevant conjugate forms that can join this and that variable through the links that exist whenever an experience, a grasp of intelligibility is given. Lower conjugate forms understand relations which exist implicitly within data (a certain range of data) and then higher conjugate forms understand relations as these refer to recurring combinations of lower conjugate forms which also exist implicitly within data. These higher relations (when known) can explain why some conjugate forms periodically combine with each other in a relation which exists between them and why these same forms periodically fall into other kinds of combinations with other conjugate forms. If, for instance, we think about how, in the human order of things, a given cultural tradition is passed on from one generation to another, an inquiry into the nature of such a thing should reveal very many relations which should exist between many differing classes of events and so we would speak about many differing conjugate forms which explain the nature of these events (the nature of these events as referring to conditions of possibility that make for the regular recurrence of these events). Regular occurrences always suggest the presence of some kind of intelligible principle or intelligible law since events which do not exhibit a pattern of regular occurrence suggest some kind of interference or breakdown that can be partially explained if we can identify chance variables which can disrupt a pattern of acts or activities that ought always to occur but which might not occur in a given situation. The more sophisticated is a given cultural tradition, the greater will be the number of variables which will need to be discovered if we are to understand how or why a given cultural tradition continues to exist in the way that it happens to be.

Turning, however, to a more simple example, if, for instance, in physics the nature of the free fall of a falling body near the surface of the earth is understood through an equation which refers to one conjugate form, then, if we turn to Sir Isaac Newton's three general laws of motion, we discover conjugate forms which exist at a further remove (at higher, more remote level). More is being

known as a substance.

understood (more data are understood) through Newton's three laws of motion than what had been understood in Galileo's law for the free fall of a falling object (falling near the surface of the earth). Whenever we notice some kind of recurrent pattern within our data of sense, we want to ask about conjugate forms in order to find proximate reasons (or proximate correlations) which can perhaps explain why certain events normally and regularly recur. As conjugate forms build on conjugate forms, our understanding accordingly broadens and deepens. In a very real way, our understanding grows in abstractness (although the abstractness refers not to the presence of any deficiencies in the intelligibilities that we comprehend and know but to a presence of greater density or depth which exists in the meanings that we happen to become familiar with).

However, if we want to understand why it is possible to speak about something which never changes but which is always subject to change (events or happenings that come and go although often according to patterns of recurrence which can be known through conjugate forms), then we must refer to another kind of unity which, as noted, as suggested, appears to be more removed from the data of sense than the species of meaning which exists whenever we think about a relation that is known within a given conjugate form. As also previously noted, a unity which refers to a thing that is known through a direct act of understanding refers to a unity that has moved beyond any kind of thing which is known initially only as a body through an act of sense and which earlier, as a body, can only be known through a corresponding act of sense. In the experiences of chaos which we can have at a sensible level, in our acts of sense, we experience an ongoing stream of successions or replacements as new experiences of data are continuously supplanting earlier experiences of data. Direct acts of understanding which, however, know about conjugate forms initially take a person beyond a sense or an experience of chaos which can be detected in our acts and data of sense (although, admittedly, in moving toward any understanding, we typically move from patterns detected in images and the data of sense to patterns that are given in the meanings which exist within conjugate forms). However, if chaos as a lack of intelligibility is to be avoided with regard to the experience which we can have of many conjugate forms, if an order is to be found among conjugate forms which can more fully reveal the meaning of any given conjugate form, then we must attend to a principle which explains how or why, at some times, some conjugate forms are related to each other in possible combinations of them and how or why, at other times, other conjugate forms are related to each other in other possible combinations of them. As has been already noted, higher conjugate forms can relate lower conjugate forms in a way that can enhance or add to the meaning of each form. We should know more, for instance, about the nature of digestion if we know about how this meaning relates to the nature of respiration and the nature of the blood's circulation. In knowing about how these different natures all relate to each other, what is known exists as a higher order of conjugate form.

However, if we want to know about why an order of succession should exist among different conjugate forms (why, at a given time, one conjugate form is properly related to another conjugate form and why, at another time, a rearrangement should properly occur in the relations which exist among different conjugate forms), then we must refer to an intelligibility which can explain or which can refer to the presence of an intelligibility that exists within a succession and which gives this succession a unity that it would otherwise not have. The succession that exists would exist as more than just a succession. Some other, higher kind of intelligibility explains why conjugate forms are variously related to each other and why, in new combinations, different sets of conjugate forms relate a different number of conjugate forms with each other. In the explanation which is given in this intelligibility, a meaning is known which transcends conjugate determinations. Through a kind of analysis or reduction that we

can make about what we find in our acts of thinking,¹⁰¹ a meaning can be adverted to and it can be identified as a grounding species of meaning despite what conjugate determinations might exist or what conjugate determinations might not exist as all these determinations refer to this basic, grounding species of meaning. Hence, we speak about the presence of a central form and a kind of primacy which refers to the meaning of a central form. On the basis of this species of meaning which we can know about as the term of a new distinct direct act of understanding, we can begin to understand the degree and kinds of participation which exist between a postulated central form and the meaning of any conjugate forms. For us, in our understanding of forms, we can begin from an understanding of central forms and, from there, move to an understanding of conjugate forms.

In concluding then what can be said about conjugate and central forms, a useful point of departure appears to be what Aquinas says when, in echoing an understanding of Aristotle's,¹⁰² he notes that "substantial form gives being absolutely to matter, whereas accidental form, inasmuch as it is form, gives being in a qualified sense."¹⁰³ Or, as Lonergan would say *hypothetically* if he were to use his own words to restate this principle insight which we can find in Aristotle's metaphysics: "central form gives being absolutely to potency, whereas conjugate form, inasmuch as it is form, gives being in a qualified sense."¹⁰⁴ Central forms and conjugate forms both refer to causes or principles that are somehow

101If, in an analysis of being, we want to distinguish between one kind of being which simply exists or which simply *is* from another kind of being which exists in something else, we can move into an assembly of different beings (an assembly of different predications that allege either this kind of being or this other kind of being) and then, by the questions that we can ask, we should be able to move toward a species of being which refers to something which simply is or which simply exists. Cf. Bobik, p. 32. We move toward instances of being which are less conditioned. We move toward a notion of being which exists as a starting point or first principle: from something that simply exists to something that exists if it exists in something else (if the other thing happens to exist). Hence, in this line of thinking, if something can exist apart from something else, it refers to a thing or a substance. But, if we take this line of thinking and if we work with this kind of reductive analysis to apply it to a possible understanding of forms (differing one kind of form from another), we should be able to reach the same kind of conclusion in an understanding that is able to distinguish the intelligibility which exists in a central form and the intelligibility which exists in a conjugate form and how these two kinds of intelligibility differ from each other and yet relate to each other.

102Please recall Aristotle's understanding of substance (his understanding of thing) and how one is to understand the being of any substance or thing. Form refers to an active principle or cause of being and matter refers to a principle of reception. Form refers to a principle of determination and matter refers to a principle of indetermination. Beings exists (beings be) whenever a form enters into a given situation and joins itself to the indeterminacy which refers to matter or potency. Hence, if form accounts for the being of things, one only needs to speak about two metaphysical principles: matter and form (or, in other words, potency and form).

103*Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 5, 3, 775. Please recall the difference which exists between body and thing (matter and substance, or potency and substance).

104Please note that, when Lonergan distinguishes between the presence of substantial or central forms and the presence of accidental or conjugate forms, within the order of being or reality, he thus distinguishes between two different kinds of presence: a substantial or central order of being and a conjugate or accidental order of being. Cf. *Early Works*, p. 135. Within the substantial or central order, we find "prime matter, substantial form, existence" and in the accidental or conjugate order, we find "eye, sight, seeing; possible intellect, *species intelligibilis*, act of understanding; the will as a faculty,

active. All potencies refer to the presence of a passive or receptive principle and no potency, as a potency, is able to lessen its own potency through any kind of shift which occurs from within it when a meaning of some kind becomes present (a meaning which refers to a form and the intelligibility which is present in a form). Hence, if we want to speak about a species of meaning which exists only to the degree that it inheres or exists within another meaning which already exists and which cannot be understood apart from knowing about the presence of this other meaning and what this meaning refers to, then we can speak about the kind of meaning which refers to a conjugate form and the reception which it can have from the viewpoint of a potency that is proper to it (a potency which refers to the presence of a conjugate potency). Hence, in this context, in the thinking and possibly also in the same kind of language which Aristotle would use, we refer to a qualified form of actualization (a qualified transition from one kind of potency to one kind of being). A conjugate potency receives a conjugate form, a form which refers to a conjugate intelligibility.

In moving then from conjugate potency and form to central potency and form, if we now want to speak about a species of meaning which cannot inhere or exist in another meaning (or which does not inhere or exist in another meaning) and which can be understood if we only refer to its constituent parts or elements, then we can speak about a species of meaning which refers to a central form and a proper receptivity which can be identified if, from the viewpoint of a central form, we think about the possible meaning of a central potency. If central potency refers to a complete absence of any meaning (if it is characterized by a complete lack or a complete privation of any intelligibility), in the possible reception of a meaning or form which puts an end to this radical kind of privation, we must speak about a species of meaning which exists as a fundament or as a ground for knowing about the meaning of every other kind of meaning. Conjugate potencies and conjugate forms presuppose what already exists in terms of central potencies and central forms (even if, initially, in our thinking and understanding, we might not have a very clear notion about what is meant by a central potency and a central form).¹⁰⁵ Hence, when

the will as habit, the will as act, willingness, willing.” Everything which exists within the conjugate or accidental order exists within something that belongs to the substantial order of being since, as soon as we attend to what exists in the accidental order, we find elements or activities which cannot exist apart from what they exist in or participate in. Potencies, forms, and acts which refers to seeing, understanding, and willing all exist as activities which belong to a subject.

105To understand better what could be meant here, think about the difference which exists if we distinguish between an implicit knowledge of metaphysics and an explicit knowledge of metaphysics (to the extent that it is possible for us to have an explicit knowledge of metaphysics). When we move into some species of explicit metaphysics, we begin to thematize, we begin to articulate what we might understand about what can be said about the nature of being in general. Admittedly, we cannot say that we understand the nature of being (what, in fact, being is). To say that we understand the nature of being would imply that we understand the nature of every single thing that exists. But, to make such a claim implies that we are enjoying an unrestricted act of understanding and we know that we can make no such claim. However, from the knowledge that we have of individual things and then from the knowledge that we can have of ourselves in how we understand individual things, we can begin to say something about the nature of being. An understanding of many different beings implies that we must have some kind of understanding which refers to the nature of being (as inchoate and obscure as this understanding might be). In this life, the nature of being remains unknown. It can be regarded as a kind of “x.” But yet, as we begin to move toward a knowledge of this “x” by noting what we know about how we move toward a knowledge of any given contingent concrete being, through our self-reflection and by asking metaphysical questions, we should find that we can say something about

we think about central potencies from a viewpoint that thinks about the meaning of central forms, we find an orientation or a receptivity in potency which points to a more radical shift which necessarily occurs whenever, in a given instance, a central form is received by a central potency (in contrast with what happens when a conjugate form is received by a conjugate potency). In the reception of a central form, it is possible to say for the first time what something is in its identity versus our not being able to say anything about anything. As soon then as we know what something is versus what it is not, we can then begin to work toward a possible further understanding about what it is that a given thing is and what it is able to do and receive. We can ask additional questions and so become more open to new possible receptions of later acts of direct understanding which can move us from acts of understanding that know about central forms (the meaning of a central form) to acts of understanding that know about conjugate forms (the meaning of any given conjugate form).

By way of a speculative, explanatory analogy that can think about the difference which exists between being and non-being (no direct experience of non-being is given to us in this life along with no direct, complete experience of unintelligibility), if a radical disjunction exists between being and non-being and if a radical transition occurs whenever we talk about being emerging from a complete absence of being, then, in the same sort of way, a similar radical shift can be noticed when, in our thinking, we can think about an emergence of meaning or intelligibility from a prior, complete absence of meaning or intelligibility. In either case, a transition moves from a condition of pure potency to a condition of actualization or realization (whether we speak about an actualization or realization that moves into intelligibility or meaning or an actualization or realization that moves into being or reality: the reality of being or, conversely, the being of reality). A complete absence of meaning refers to a species of pure potency as this is related to the possible reception of an act of direct understanding which knows about the presence of a central form while, on the other hand, a complete absence of being refers to a species of pure potency as this related to the possible later reception of an act of rational affirmation which knows about the presence of a new presence (a presence which has shifted from a presence of intelligibility to a presence of being or reality). An understood meaning has been understood to possess a form of being or reality which is rooted in intelligibility but which is not to be simply equated with an experience or presence of intelligibility (a reality of being or a reality of existence which, by way of a technical designation, we can identify as a “supra-intelligibility”).¹⁰⁶ In the ordering which exists between intelligibility and reality (as intelligibility leads to reality), reality *as a determination* cannot be equated with potency as a presence of indetermination and, at the same time, reality cannot be equated with an absence of intelligibility. To suppose otherwise is to conclude that reality and intelligibility exclude each other, there being no inner connection which exists between them.

For this reason thus, when, in the Aristotelian tradition of thinking, we find words which say that “substantial form gives being absolutely to matter,” in order to understand the meaning of these words, we can attend to a metaphysical standpoint which this wording implies and we can speak about how we

being as the subject matter of metaphysics. See *Insight*, p. 416, to see how Lonergan distinguishes between an implicit or latent metaphysics and an explicit metaphysics.

¹⁰⁶Vertin, “Judgments of Value,” p. 228. In Vertin, “supra-intelligibility” refers to different kinds of reality that are all rooted in presences or experiences of intelligibility. Realities of fact and realities of good or value (that have yet to be put into any kind of existential effect) both exist as supra-intelligibilities when acts of direct understanding or acts of deliberative understanding need to be complemented, respectively, by acts of factual judgment or by acts of deliberative judgment (commonly referred to as judgments of good or as judgments of value).

can distinguish a primary intelligibility from a secondary intelligibility. A primary intelligibility emerges from a former, complete lack of intelligibility which refers to an experience or a presence of indeterminacy. Hence, as we speculate and think about what could be the meaning or intelligibility of being or reality (even if this meaning or intelligibility is not understood or known by us) and as we speculate and think about the possibility of a complete lack of intelligibility in any given set of data (a complete lack of meaning), it follows from this that, in a complete lack of intelligibility, there would exist a complete lack or absence of being or reality (or, in other words here, we can speak about an unqualified absence of being or reality). Hence, bluntly put, we speak about a primary intelligibility when we want to speak about an emergence that moves from an initial complete lack or absence of determination (a complete absence of determination which can be correlated with a complete absence of being: an absence of being which would refer to a complete absence of form). We speak thus about the emergence of a central form. But, on the contrary, the same sort of thing cannot be said about secondary intelligibilities which, as a designation, in their meaning, refer to the intelligibility of conjugate forms. Conjugate forms refer to meanings that are essentially relative since they cannot be understood apart from how they are related to a meaning which refers to the presence of a central form. In seeking to understand the meaning of any conjugate form, a relative lack of intelligibility can be thus adverted to in our experience of understanding. However, at no time can we speak about a complete or an absolute lack of understanding in our understanding. In our understanding, something is already being understood about something. We know, for instance, that this is not that and that there are many things that can be said about a given thing or object if we are able to grow in our proper understanding of it. In seeking thus to understand any conjugate form, we work with an implicit awareness that already first knows about a meaning which refers to the presence of a central form. The meaning is obscure. It is not fully understood. But, it exists within an inchoate intellectual consciousness which we happen to have whenever we begin to ask questions about the meaning of any given thing. Our questioning, if you will, presupposes a meaning which can identify if we speak about what exists as a central form and how a central form is not to be confused with an order of meaning which refers to conjugate forms which we can begin to know about in later direct acts of understanding which could be given to us.

In conclusion, in the relation which exists between a central form and a conjugate form, relative to each other, the central form is to be understood as if it exists as a constant and the conjugate form is to be understood as if it exists as a variable which comes and goes. Explaining the difference is the fact that a conjugate form refers to a property of some kind which can possibly add to the perfection or the fuller being of a given existing thing (which possesses a form or an intelligibility of its own which, as noted, refers to a central, substantial form). The intelligibility of a given conjugate form points to conditions which could lead to the reception of activities and operations that can add to the goodness of a thing's being or existence (enhancing the meaning present in a given central form). And so, in this context, we understand why we can speak about conjugate or accidental forms as variables. It belongs, for instance, to the nature of our eyes that they are able to see although the seeing of our eyes occurs within a context that is defined by the presence of a unity which refers to the presence of a substantial or central form (in this case: our incarnate humanity, our incarnate human nature). The embodiment peculiar to conjugate forms explains why, in their own way, they can be referred to as essences but without the meaning of an essence which refers a thing or substance (the union which exists between a given central potency and a given central form). The essence of a conjugate form (as it is joined to a conjugate potency) is not to be equated with any kind of distinct thing which can have an intelligibility and life of its own. However, since accidental, conjugate essences create conditions which can lead to subsequent acts or operations which can add to the perfection of a conjugate form and which can also

add to the perfection of a central form, they can be referred to as operative potencies or as active potencies. Habitual ways of acting, thinking, or behaving (which we already have or which we have acquired) can be similarly referred to as operative potencies or as conjugate forms because, as a relation which joins one species of act with another species of act, they exist as dispositions which explain why certain activities can be more easily done and not some other set of activities.