

Metaphysical Principles: Potency

In his theology, Aquinas employs a set of metaphysical principles of explanation that, to some extent, is largely derived from the metaphysics of Aristotle and Aquinas's study of this metaphysics (even as Aquinas adds to Aristotle's metaphysics by way of introducing a number of distinctions which were unknown to Aristotle).¹ Hence, later on, if Aquinas's theology is to be understood, these metaphysical principles must be understood although they are difficult to understand precisely because of the fact that they do not exist as descriptions which simply refer to the data of sense. They do not exist as experiential conjugates (to use a way of speaking which comes to us from the conceptuality which we

¹In Aristotle's metaphysics it is argued that, if we want to understand being (the being of anything which happens to exist), we must attend to form. Being is explained by form: whenever form is received by a given instance of matter. Hence, put bluntly, being is form and form is being because nothing exists in this world without its having received a degree of determination or specificity and it is form (functioning as an active principle) and not matter (functioning as a passive principle) which confers a degree of determination on anything to indicate what a given thing is and, indirectly, what it is not. Hence, in the context of a metaphysics of form, we conclude with Aristotle that form is the cause of the being of things. It is the *aition tou einai* [the cause of being]; in Latin, the *causa essendi*. Cf. Aquinas, *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 7, 17, 1667-1668 as cited by Lonergan, *Collection*, p. 135; Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, p. 171; *Understanding and Being*, p. 51. Form explains why an object is what it is. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 7, 17; Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 390-391; *Collection*, p. 135; 144; "Transcript of Conversations from a Boston College Symposium," unpublished, Boston, 13 June 1978. As Lonergan cites from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 7, 17 in *Insight*, pp. 390-391: "the cause of being is its immanent form."

However, if, later on, we are forced to distinguish between the nature or form of any given thing and the act of its being or existence (or, in other words, if a real distinction does truly exist between the essence of a thing and the existence of a thing), then we can no longer adequately speak about the being of things by referring to form. We must advert to the existence of a third metaphysical principle which is other than matter and form, and this third metaphysical principle refers to act. Act is the cause of being and not form. It is the *actus essendi*. And so, if we are to explain why the nature or essence of a thing is not to be confused with its act of being or existence; if we are to explain, for instance, why Christ exists as a single being or person with two natures and not one nature (in Lonergan's language, Christ exists as the single, undivided subject of two different natures), then, with Aquinas, we must add the principle of existence or act to the ontological principles which already exist when we speak about the matter and form of Aristotle's metaphysics. Cf. Lonergan, *Collection*, p. 144; *Incarnate Word*, pp. 105-106; William A. Mathews, *Lonergan's Quest: A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 71. In the metaphysics of Aquinas, we find an order of principles which can be used to make finer distinctions. A greater explanatory power applies to the metaphysics of Aquinas than that of Aristotle.

To understand more fully why Aquinas speaks about act as the cause of being and not form or, in other words, to understand why Aquinas introduces a differentiation into the metaphysics of Aristotle which before had not existed, we need to delve into earlier developments as these existed within Catholic theology when it was decided that Christ is best spoken about as an existing being who happens to have two natures: one human; the other, divine. In 451 AD, at the ecumenical Council of

find in Bernard Lonergan's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*).² They exist rather as a consequence of understanding which transcends what is simply known through our acts of sense. They exist as explanatory conjugates by which or through which we understand all things that can be properly known by our human acts of cognition. We recall a basic distinction which Aquinas had drawn between the proper object of human cognition and the final or the intrinsic object of our human cognition.³ The final or ultimate object is always reality or being (the totality of being or the totality of reality). But, on the other hand, the proper object of our human cognition is always meaning or intelligibility as this exists within a set of material conditions. In the language of Aristotle and Aquinas, the proper object of our human cognition always exists as form located within matter (given the nature and structure of human cognition where all human acts of knowing begin with acts of sense before human cognition moves into acts of understanding and acts of judgment). By attending then to a basic set of metaphysical principles which exist as the first principles of all things which exist and which we can know about (we focus on naturally existing things and not on artificially existing things which exist as artifacts), we work with a set of elements that we can use for understanding how every

Chalcedon, in order to counter misleading understandings about who or what Christ is, the Church's Magisterium judged it best to proclaim that Christ exists as a single, undivided person who is informed by two differing natures. For religious reasons, we cannot say or assume that a being cannot have more than one nature although, admittedly, for most beings, we can safely assume that oneness of being is to be associated with oneness of nature. The two typically go together: one being, one nature. But, because now they do not always go together (as is the case with Christ), a problem was created for later theologians who must now try to explain or find reasons which can indicate why oneness of nature or essence does not always accompany any oneness of being. Hence, if it is now truly possible to say that a given being or thing can have more than one nature, then, for reasons of coherence, a real distinction needs to be admitted as regards the difference which exists between the existence or being of a thing and the having of any kind of nature. From a development in the Church's dogmatic theology and a further development in the Church's dogmatic teaching, a problem was created for philosophy: a context was created which led to the discovery of a third metaphysical principle which needs to be acknowledged. Forms can be rightly understood to refer to meanings which exist in an eternal way. This insight of Plato and Aristotle can be correctly retained. But, beyond the principle of form, act exists as another legitimate principle. Act replaces form as a higher ordering of meaning. In act there exists a degree of reality which exceeds what can be found in the principle of form. Relative to act, form is lacking in a presence of reality which, ideally, it should have.

²See, for instance, *Insight*, p. 102.

³*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 2; q. 87, a. 3, ad 1. Cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 98, 9: "the proper object of intellect [as intellect] is *intelligible being*, which includes all possible differences and species of being, since whatever can be, can be known." See also Lonergan, *Early Latin Theology*, p. 109. When speaking about the "Isomorphism of Thomist and Scientific Thought," in *Collection*, p. 137, Lonergan notes that Aquinas distinguishes between the proper object of the human intellect and a second kind of object which is "being in its full sweep." In "Christ as Subject: A Reply," p. 177, the two objects are distinguished as proper from formal. While inquiry seeks to know the forms of all things, the forms of all things insofar as all things exist and possess being, cognitive performance works with images to apprehend forms that are located within matter. Moving from proper objects to final objects requires an extrapolation that can transcend material conditions. For further information about objects, see Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 561 where Lonergan speaks about three notions of object in Aquinas: "an object can be either a mover that brings about an act in a potency, or a term produced by an act, or the end to which a potency tends through acts."

proportionate being is to be understood (being as proportionate being referring to being as it can be properly known by us through our acts of human cognition).⁴

However, if metaphysical principles and the order which exists among metaphysical principles is to be understood in a manner which can resonate with the experience that we have of ourselves as human beings (the inner or interior consciousness that we have of ourselves in our cognitive experience and activity), we will need to find an approach or a way of proceeding that can achieve this resonance (a resonance which can create a form of inner identification within ourselves as we begin to think and act from an awareness and knowledge that is now attuned to the real existence of metaphysical principles). From the meanings that we can come to know about from within ourselves, we can then understand why metaphysical principles exist as distinct realities or distinct components in really existing things (that we come to know about in our world) and why they can be regarded as highly useful tools for effecting a form of organization which refers to an order of things that are both known by us or which we can know through our acts of human cognition.

To begin then with an approach that can help us better understand the genesis and use of metaphysical principles (which are to be viewed as largely deriving from the metaphysics of Aristotle), a clue is given by Aquinas when he correlates human cognitional activity with the results or the terms of this cognitional activity. Cognitive activity, as performed by human beings, always has its own proper object.⁵ In his *Commentary on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard, his earliest theological synthesis,

⁴William A. Stewart, *Introduction to Lonergan's Insight: An Invitation to Philosophize* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), p. 155; Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 535-536; pp. 416-417. Proportionate being is to be roughly correlated with finite being as finite being was understood and defined in the context of traditional scholastic terminology. Cf. Patrick H. Byrne, "Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76 (Summer 2002): 373. As Stewart notes, metaphysical principles cannot be further reduced or broken down into components or parts which are to be regarded as constitutive elements. The metaphysical principles exist as elements (basic elements).

Please note here that a more comprehensive notion of being can be approached if we say that transcendent being is something which can be imperfectly known through analogous acts of human understanding which seek to move toward it as the final object of human cognition (a goal that is reached by working with analogies which think in terms of a general "analogy of being"). Cf. Clarke, *The One and the Many*, pp. 44-57. From the real but limited knowledge which we have of beings that exist and whose existence we can rationally affirm through the reflective acts of understanding which are present in our judgment, one can think about being in terms of how this exists as a determination or specification which does not refer to anything that exists in a contingent way. Necessary being (or, in other words, transcendent being) is invoked as a principle of explanation for the existence of all contingent beings. But, from postulates which speak about a likely set of characteristics as this applies to necessary being, one can then speak about God as an originating, unrestricted act of being or existence: God *uti in se est*. See Clarke, p. 49, for how he speaks about an "analogy of proper proportionality" as this applies to an analogy of being which can move from a restricted understanding of what being is to unrestricted notions that can be entertained about what can be the meaning of being.

⁵*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a. 11. Between the mode of being and the mode of knowing in a human being, a proportion, *proportio*, or correlation can be discovered and this proportion between the mode of a subject's being and the mode of its knowing carries over into a proportion that is

Aquinas notes that “the first operation of the intellect regards the quiddity [the essence or “whatness”]⁶ of a thing [i.e., the form of a thing as it exists within matter]” and “the second regards its existence or being [the reality or being of a form as it exists within matter].”⁷ In his *Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima*, Aquinas uses a different wording although he also similarly notes that, if we attend to what we human beings do in the kinds of questions that we asks as human beings, two different operations of the human mind can be distinguished from each other. Each has a different, distinct object. “To understand [*intelligere*] pertains to intellectual apprehension” while “to be wise [*sapere*] pertains to intellectual judgment.”⁸ However, before we attend to these two basic operations of the mind, let us first advert to the fact that Aquinas constantly talks about how all human knowing begins with sensing, with sense experience. In the *De Veritate* and in many other texts, Aquinas argues that “our knowledge

reflected in the order of being or reality which refers to an ontology or metaphysics. Aquinas, in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 96, 5, directly refers to the existence of proportionality in noting that “the mode of a thing’s proper operation corresponds *proportionately* to the mode of its substance and nature.” Italics mine. As Aquinas elsewhere refers to this metaphysical principle: “the way in which each thing acts is a consequence of its being.” Cf. *On Spiritual Creatures*, trans. M. C. Fitzpatrick and J. J. Wellmuth, as cited by Murray, “Immortality in Light of Lonergan’s Explicit Metaphysics,” p. 7.

With respect to a proportion between the order of knowing and an order or structure in that which is known, Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 223, n. 51, quotes a text from the earlier *Super 4 sententiarum*. d. 49, q. 2, a. 1, ad 6 of Aquinas which had referred to a proportion which should exist between the order or structure of knowing and a like order which should exist in the order of what can be properly and connaturally known. “The potency of the one knowing has to be on a level with the knowability of the thing known.” Later, in the same way, texts in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 84, a. 7; a. 8; q. 85, a. 1; and a. 8 all speak about a connatural, proportional relation between the embodiment of the human soul (the human soul informing a human body) and the embedded existence of forms within matter which is the proper object of human knowing. With respect to human beings, and also with respect to angels and to God, a distinct strict proportion exists between the knowing of a certain type of subject, on the one hand, and what is being known by the same subject, on the other hand.

6I translate “quiddity” or the Latin *quidditas* as “whatness” since this word is derived from the Latin interrogative *quid* meaning “what.” While *quidditas rei* is translated as “quiddity of a thing,” *quid rei* is translated as “what a thing is”; it refers to the definition of a thing.

7Aquinas, *Super I Sententiarum*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7, my translation, cited by Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 17, n. 24; and quoted also in *Philosophical Texts*, trans. by Thomas Gilby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 222, n. 606 with a slightly different wording. For corroboration, see the *De Veritate*, q. 4, a. 2; q. 3, a. 2; q. 14, a. 1; and the *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 6, 4, 1232. In the *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3, Aquinas speaks of two mental operations in a more extended discussion.

The intellect has two operations, one called the “understanding of indivisibles,” by which it knows *what* a thing is; and another by which it composes and divides, that is to say, by forming affirmative and negative enunciations. Now these two operations correspond to two principles in things. The first operation has regard to the nature itself of a thing, in virtue of which the known thing holds a certain rank among beings, whether it be a complete thing, as some whole, or an incomplete thing, as a part or an accident. The second operation has regard to a things’s act

proceeds in this order: first, it begins in sense and, second, it is completed in the intellect.”⁹ As Aristotle had also argued in the *De Anima*, the human intellect or *nous* “is naturally moved by the sensitive apprehension in the way in which a potency is moved by an object.”¹⁰ Understanding begins with potentiality, with initial acts of sense and not with any ideas that already exist innately within our human minds.¹¹ All cognition begins with what the senses receive in their operation.¹²

Hence, when we attend to sense experience and to the two different operations of the mind which Aquinas sharply distinguishes from each other in terms of a real minor distinction,¹³ human cognition can be seen to consist of three distinct activities, three distinct acts, three distinct operations, and, from these operations, we can distinguish three correlatives which exist within the order of what is known which, in turn, refers to the order of being or reality. For every element which exists in the cognitional order, a corresponding element exists in the ontological or metaphysical order of things.¹⁴ By moving through these three different kinds of cognitional act and by attending to how they are all related or ordered to each other through a unifying intending or seeking of being which moves us from one kind of act or operation to another kind of act or operation,¹⁵ we move toward understanding three basic

of existing (*esse*), which results from the union of the principles of a thing in composite substances, or, as in the case of simple substances, accompanies the thing’s simple nature.

Gilby’s translation, p. 221, n. 604, is more precise.

Of the two phases of mental activity, the first is the understanding of essential meanings, while the second is a judgment, either affirmative or negative. A dual reality corresponds to these activities: to the former corresponds the nature of a thing, according to its state of being, complete or incomplete, part or accident, as the case may be; to the latter corresponds the existence of the thing.

In *Verbum*, p. 17, n. 20, Lonergan lists a number of works by Aquinas which refer to two basic operations of the mind, a twofold operation of the mind (*duplex mentis operatio*). Besides citations from the *De Veritate*, citations refer to *De Potentia*, q. 8, a. 1, c.; q. 9, a. 5 c.; *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, 5, a. 9 c.; and *Super Ioannem*, c. 1, lect. 1.

⁸*Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 7, 672.

⁹*De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 11; my translation. Later, in q. 12, a. 3, *ad 2*, Aquinas restates his position by noting that “the senses are the first source of our knowledge.”

¹⁰*De Veritate*, q. 5, a. 10. In other words, sensible experiences elicit human interest and inquiry: an asking of questions that can lead to increments in understanding.

¹¹*De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 6.

¹²*Sententia super Physicam*, 1, 1, 8; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a. 12; 1a2ae, q. 50, a. 3, *ad 3*. “The rational [cognitive] powers of apprehension naturally receive from the sensitive powers,” my translation.

¹³Sensing, understanding, and judging refer to activities which have a common human subject. The same person moves from one species of activity to another.

¹⁴Lonergan, *Collection*, p. 144; *Early Works*, pp. 195-196.

¹⁵Lonergan, *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, pp. 11-13. In the language which Lonergan uses, he speak about an “intending intention of being.” Our intending of being

metaphysical principles which exist as correlatives and how these metaphysical principles are intimately related or ordered to each other. What is known directly about experiencing, understanding, and judging is then used as a basis for an indirect species of knowledge (an analogical or heuristic species of knowledge) which can speak about what is meant when we speak about the respective meanings of potency, form, and act. A new, single definition is derived from this analogical heuristic knowledge and, by it, we know about what is meant by potency, form, and act and how they all relate to each other (how the meaning of one component is defined by the meaning of the other components).¹⁶ Potency (or potentiality) is what is experienced through acts of sense but which is not yet known (it is “the potentially intelligible”); form (or intelligibility) is what is experienced through an act of understanding which grasps a meaning within data but which is not yet known to be real or true

determines when and where we engage in one kind of cognitional act versus some other kind of cognitional act. Our intending works through our experience of curiosity and wonder in a way which encourages us to ask different questions: first this question, then that question. The different questions encourage us to move from one kind of cognitional act to another species of cognitional act. In our desire for understanding and knowledge, within our consciousness of self, we find a conscious intending intention of being which, as an activity, functions as a species of first cause or first principle within the order of our human cognition (a first cause or first principle which explains how or why, in our human cognition, a self-assembling kind of movement presents itself to us in a manner which points to a gathering of differing acts or operations into a unity which is geared toward acts of understanding which can lead us toward growth in the extent and depth of our personal knowledge). With every act of knowing which occurs in our human cognition, something of being is known. Something of being is known by us for the first time and, with a closer relation which begins to exist between the order of being and the order of our human cognition, we are more completely joined to an order of beings (an order of realities) which transcend the being of our personal existence.

¹⁶See Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, pp. 201-208, where Lonergan speaks about how we can best move toward a knowledge of metaphysical principles if, at the beginning, the principle object of our focus is an understanding of our own understanding. One's intelligence ponders one's intelligence in a manner which does not attend to anything that exists outside a human subject or which points to anything that exists outside a human subject. Or, in other words and with greater accuracy, we can say that our intellectual inquiry attends to the experience which we have of our intellectual inquiry. As Patrick Byrne argues in “Lonergan's Retrieval of Aristotelian Form,” p. 373: form, as a metaphysical principle, is understood if we begin initially with an understanding of our acts of understanding. Form exists as a term of our direct acts of understanding. First, we directly understand our own acts of understanding (or we try to directly understand our acts of understanding) and then we can think and speak about the meaning of form as a metaphysical principle and not about form as a form is understood in the context of a specific science. However, if form is understood on a basis that is grounded in an analogy (the analogy works from a level of achievement in our self-understanding and self-knowledge: the self-understanding and self-knowledge that we have of our acts of understanding and about how our acts of understanding relate to prior acts of sensing and to later acts of reflective understanding present in judgment), then, similarly, by analogy, by an analogy that works from a level of achievement in our self-understanding and self-knowledge, in the same way, we can understand what is meant when we speak about potency and act. Potency, form, and act are not directly understood. They can only be understood as general metaphysical principles if we first understand what is meant when we speak about our acts of sensing, understanding, and judging and about how our acts of sensing, understanding, and judging relate to each other in the performance that is constitutive of these different acts as distinct operations.

(it is “the formally intelligible”;¹⁷ it is the intelligible in the sensible);¹⁸ and act (or existence) is what is experienced through a judgment which rationally posits the reality of what was first grasped as a form through one’s initial act of direct understanding which has grasped a meaning within one’s experience of data.¹⁹ Act refers to what is really or actually intelligible.²⁰ As the meaning of one given kind of cognitional act is known by how it is ordered to another kind of cognitional act, the meaning of a given species of metaphysical principle is known by *how it is ordered to another species of metaphysical principle*.²¹ By this means, we understand why the form or order which exists within our human cognition (as regards experiencing, understanding, and judging) is the same form or order which we find in the relation which exists among metaphysical principles (potency, form, and act). Two unities can be distinguished when we refer to a unity which exists within the order of our human cognition versus a second unity which exists when we refer to the order of being (a cognitional species of unity joins acts of experiencing, understanding, and judging with each other to form a specific type of oneness and a metaphysical species of unity joins potency, form, and act with each other to form another specific type of oneness).²² And yet, at the same time, in a more fundamental way, we advert to

17In his own conceptuality (which differs from that of Aquinas), for Lonergan, the relation which exists between matter and form is to be compared to the relation which similarly exists between acts of sense and acts of direct understanding. In Lonergan’s own words, “matter and form” are “related to one another as, say, imaginative representation to insight.” Cf. Lonergan, *Early Works*, p. 61.

18As Lonergan notes in *Early Works*, p. 587: “mass, temperature, electromagnetic field, periodic table, evolution” emerge as terms, as outer words that refer to the meaning of inner words which, in turn, refer to meanings that are grasped by our direct acts of understanding (meanings which are signified by these outer words although they cannot be directly indicated by any pointing to the presence of a datum of sense which refers to the sensible correlative of an act of sense. A datum of sense cannot be equated with mass even if we can argue that the meaning of mass can be verified in ways which refer to various data of sense and the experiences which we can have about what is given to us in various data of sense. See also *Early Works*, p. 538: “mass is not weight.”

19Thomas V. Daly, “Metaphysics,” *Australian Lonergan Workshop II*, eds. Matthew C. Ogilvie & William J. Danaher (Drummoyne, Australia: Novum Organum Press, 2002), p. 6. Daly correlates potentiality, intelligibility, and existence with potency, form, and act since he works with a conceptuality that explicitly moves from different species of cognitive act to different species of metaphysical principle. Potency, form, and act exist as metaphysical principles while potentiality, intelligibility, and existence refer to these same principles in a way which emphasizes their cognitive origin (their cognitive relation as terms of the three different kinds of cognitional operation which refer to acts of experiencing, understanding, and judging).

20Stewart, pp. 99-100; pp. 154-155.

21Stewart, pp. 156-157; Lonergan, *Early Works*, p. 196. See, for instance, how Stebbins, in his *Divine Initiative*, p. 144, refers to a meaning and definition of potency: “potency is an orientation or order toward act (*ordo ad actum*).”

22Please note that the unity which exists between potency, form, and act and the unity which exists between acts of sensing, understanding, and judging explains why we speak about minor real distinctions which distinguish potency, form, and act from each other and why also we speak about minor real distinctions which distinguish acts of sensing, understanding, and judging from each other. A given subject (a subject who exists as a subject and who enjoys a unity which is proper to his being as a subject) engages in many acts of sensing, understanding, and judging and, similarly, we say that a concretely existing thing is constituted by principles or elements which refer to instances or presences

a unity which exists between these two unities. While Aquinas speaks about the presence of a proportionate order or a proportionate form, Lonergan speaks about the presence of an isomorphic form or an isomorphic relation.²³ Knowing (intelligibility) implies being and, conversely, being implies knowing (or, in other words, being implies intelligibility).²⁴ The shift or change in conceptuality as we move from Aquinas to Lonergan points to a shift or change in Lonergan's point of departure which explicitly works toward metaphysics after first entering into the details of an analysis of the dynamics of human cognition and the self-transcendence which is endemic to the proper nature and functioning of our human cognition.

In the desire for understanding and truth which exists in human inquiry, in an anticipatory way, potential human knowers are already directly joined to a world of real objects and what can be known about these objects through human apprehensions of intelligibility and truth.²⁵ Through intelligibility, being or reality is known and no being is real if it exists apart from intelligibility, apart from what could be intelligible. In Lonergan's own words: being or reality "is neither beyond the intelligible nor apart from it nor different from it."²⁶ Hence, as we think about the kind of questioning which we do when we engage in acts of intelligent intending (intelligent intending is present in our acts of intelligent questioning), and as we attend to what could be the content of this intending as this content exists within an act of understanding (best specified as an act of direct understanding), we refer to a meaning which, in word or concept, is to be identified as an intelligibility.²⁷ The intelligible or what is intelligible refers to the possibility of an intelligibility as this perhaps exists within a set of material conditions and as this intelligibility also perhaps exists in a way which serves to elicit our inquiry and interest (even if it is not understood and has yet to be understood). However, in any later kind of questioning which would exist as a specification of reasonable or rational intending, what is grasped

of potency, form, and act. We use major real distinctions to distinguish subjects or things from each other and minor real distinctions in order to speak about component parts and the kind of difference which exists with respect to the reality of the different parts. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 311, n. 17.

23Stewart, p. 99, pp. 154-155; Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 138; p. 425; *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 691.

24Hence, we understand why absence of intelligibility implies lack of being and vice versa. Possible intelligibility is to be equated with possible being (possible instances of being) and thus whatever is unintelligible is to be equated with what is not possible or impossible (what cannot possibly be or what cannot be brought into being or brought into existence). Hence, nothing exists without its having an intelligible ground or some kind of explanation which could account for the being of its existence. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, pp. 41-42, & p. 311, n. 18, citing Lonergan, *Verbum*, pp. 43-44, and *Insight*, pp. 499-502. Nothing exists simply as a matter of fact ("without rhyme or reason").

25Lonergan, *Early Works*, p. 546.

26Stewart, p. 157, quoting Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 523. It is to be noted, of course, that some philosophies do not hold to this position. In process philosophy, for instance, as this has descended from the thought of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, it has been argued that being is grounded by becoming and that becoming is so basic and foundational that, in itself, it cannot be really understood. But, if becoming exists as the ground of being and if becoming is something which cannot be understood, we can ask if being or reality can be regarded as intelligible. If being is grounded in something that is lacking in intelligibility, we can wonder if it is possible for us to speak about the intelligibility of being (the intelligibility of reality).

27Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 11.

through a reflective act of understanding is a meaning (an intelligibility) which, in word or concept, is to be known as a truth (identified as a known truth). The true or what is true refers to something that exists. It refers to something which is real. In the order of being, the intelligibility which is first intended and which is grasped in a direct act of understanding is known as a form. Intelligibility and form coincide (operationally, within a direct act of understanding). A form is discovered and it is supposed that it exists within a set of material conditions. Then, in the same order of being, through a reflective act of understanding, an intelligibility which exists as a form is grasped as a truth and the reality of a known truth refers to its real being, a real being which exists as act and which is signified whenever we speak about acts. If lack of intelligibility always goes with lack of reality, presences of intelligibility make for reality: presences of intelligibility within a knower lead to reality and, on the other hand, reality exists if intelligibility exists within it.

Potency

In turning now to basic metaphysical principles and to how we might distinguish these principles from each other in a manner which also points to a relation of interdependence that allows us also to speak about the uniqueness of each principle, with respect to potency, in the order of our human cognition, potency refers to what is first simply given to us in our sensible experience. A common designation refers to the data of sense or “sense data” (a term allegedly first coined by the English philosopher, G. E. Moore, early in the 20th Century). The given is what can be seen, touched, heard, smelt, and tasted. However, as simply experienced, what is given as potency lacks any determination or specificity. For analogies, we might think about clay which can be fashioned into a pot, or about bronze which can be used to form a statue, or about water which can be put into glass. Before these materials are worked with, they simply exist without any form or shape.²⁸ In mere sensing, we do not know what we are experiencing and so, for purposes of speaking about an unknown and the awareness that we may have of an unknown which we experience, we speak about it in terms of potency. Something has yet to be known for what it is or something has yet to be understood in terms of what it is.

To use another example, if we take a book and open it and look at lines on a page, and if we only attend to what is seen and to nothing else, the only thing which is seen are black marks on a flat white surface. Seeing, as seeing, presents nothing else. A person might not know that certain marks function as letters which could convey a meaning to whoever knows the script of a particular language. To move to a stronger example however, if, as a thought experiment, we try to read a book by emptying out of our minds all of our presuppositions and our past understanding of things, the result will be an induced “blank slate” or an “empty head” which knows nothing about anything. Similarly, if we were to enter a place like the Sistine Chapel and look about, and if we only attend to the terms of our acts of sensing and experiencing, we would only see different colors and the different arrangements of these colors. At best, only sensible forms or shapes would be perceived. What they mean is an unasked, unquestioned question at this point and so, on the basis of this indeterminacy, experience as experience presents itself to us in a way which points to an experienced “haziness of data” (or, in other words, the “ambiguity of data”).

²⁸In his *Physics* and in his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle takes an analogy from the plastic arts when he speaks about how a metal worker *cum* artist takes bronze and, by working with it, gives it a form or a shape which communicates a meaning. Prior to the imposition of a form or shape, the bronze lacks meaning.

While an initial meaning for potency can be determined from a study that looks at how human beings make things out of raw materials which had initially lacked a form or shape that is later given to them, if we turn to an introspective form of inquiry that asks about the nature of our human understanding (our acts of human understanding), a meaning for potency can be known in an interior way and, through this interiority, we can argue that potency can be known in a way which is also more direct. Hence, prior to the reception of any kind of understanding, the human intellect (our human understanding) simply exists as a pure potency or pure potentiality.²⁹ Or perhaps, in another way, we can say that, at the moment, in this given context, our human understanding (the human intellect or human mind) is not existing (it does not truly exist) although it could perhaps come into being or come into a manner of existence which is proper to it at some later point in time. From human sensing and only from this sensing comes a knowledge or a familiarity which is akin to an animal form of knowing.³⁰ In acts of sense, recognitions of one kind or another do occur. However, when we, as human persons, begin to realize, by our understanding, that sensing is not understanding the meanings of things that are being sensed by us nor is sensing knowing the truth of meanings that have been understood by us, then the potentiality or potency of sensing (as this relates to later acts of inquiry which can lead to other, possible acts of cognition) presents itself to us as an experience which points to the potentiality or potency of everything that can be experienced through our acts of sense. What exists in a purely potential state in the order of things has yet to become anything in particular. It lacks any kind of form or determination although, in words, it would not be true to say that what exists in a purely potential state is not lacking in capacity, or in capability, or in determinability.³¹ The talk about capacity, capability, or determinability only refers to other, different ways by which it is possible to speak about the presence of potency or potentiality (the existence of potency or potentiality in a given situation). Something has yet to be in terms of meaning and also possibly in terms of fact although it exists in a way which refers to what it can mean or be or what it is able to mean or be.

Potency as Prime Potency

To understand the meaning of potency in a more differentiated or in a deeper way, the pure potency of not understanding or not knowing anything at the level of sense is to be correlated with a type of potency which, in metaphysics, can be referred to in different ways either as “pure potency,”³² as

²⁹*De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8.

³⁰In a story which illustrates the difference between human knowing and animal knowing (given in an email of March 23, 2005), J. Mohler writes as follows: “A prosecutor shows a jury a picture of a defendant stealing a wallet. The prosecutor says, 'Look at the picture, this is proof that the defendant is guilty.' The jury looks at the picture and they all see the man stealing the wallet, the evidence is irrefutable and so they pronounce the defendant, 'Guilty!' A minute later a dog walks into the court room and the prosecutor shows the dog the picture, the dog stares at the picture, the prosecutor asks the dog, 'Well is he guilty?' The dog walks away sniffing for food. What's the point? The dog 'sees' the exact same thing as the people, the exact same sense experience but to the dog, the sense experience means absolutely nothing, has no meaning whatsoever because in the dog there is no act of understanding. To put it another way, a picture is not even a picture without an act of understanding.” Without understanding (the entry of an act of understanding), it is not possible to speak about the existence of potency as a distinct metaphysical principle nor is it possible to speak about the existence of any other metaphysical principle.

³¹Stewart, p. 169.

³²Stewart, p. 169. Please note that, because, in this life, as human beings, we never directly

“prime potency,”³³ or as “radical potency.”³⁴ When commenting on how Aristotle speaks about the role of “formless matter” in the generation of things, in his language Aquinas had spoken about “prime matter” (which has been translated by some as “primary matter”).³⁵ However, since our human knowing never exists in a total state of ignorance (since, for instance, the asking of questions implies that we know that we do not understand or know something), in the same way, pure potency, prime potency, radical potency, or prime matter, as a metaphysical principle, is something which we cannot directly encounter in our experience of life. It is never simply experienced as a datum of sense through a specific act of sense, nor can it be imagined through an act which tries to picture what such a thing could possibly look like.³⁶ The absence of direct correlations accordingly explains why pure potency, prime potency, or prime matter exists as an explanatory principle (it exists as an explanatory theorem or as an explanatory idea) which we encounter through our understanding and which we propose as a rational postulate for purposes of additional, further understanding. And so, as discovered, proposed, and postulated, it exists not as a datum of sense but as a datum or as a term of our intellectual consciousness.³⁷ In other words, it does not exist as a descriptive category nor as a descriptive or

experience pure potency or prime matter as a datum of sense (because everything which we sense we sense in a manner which is determined or which is influenced by the presence of one or more rational principles that exist or which impinge on our manner of sensing in our acts of sensing), for this reason, our experience of potency is something which always occurs through a mediation which comes to us through formal principles which exist within our intellectual consciousness.

33Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 468; Murray, “Immortality in Light of Lonergan's Explicit Metaphysics,” p. 10.

34Clarke, p. 143.

35*Sententia super Physicam*, 1, 13, 118. In Lonergan's *Verbum*, p. 154, n. 13, this text is referred to with a different notation. It is to be noted too that, in his conceptuality, Lonergan prefers to speak about prime potency and not about primary potency.

36See Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 55, on the third degree of abstraction in the development and genesis of our human understanding and how, in metaphysics, we engage in a form of inquiry that exists at a further remove from a first kind of inquiry which refers to the empirical sciences and a second kind of inquiry which refers to the study of mathematics.

37In the kind of language which Lonergan uses *to explain* how or why we can speak about prime potency as a reality, he notes that, as an identifying characteristic of prime potency, potency can be understood as that which is to be known by us if and when we work within an “intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue.” Cf. Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 468. In other words, we do not know anything about prime potency if we work within a context of meaning which is solely determined by pragmatic concerns and interests. Commonsense intelligence works to achieve limited goals or aims within the order of our human praxis. It wants to know about how we should immediately respond to concrete problems amid differing circumstances as these are encountered in the course of our day to day human living. But, if we are to discover a meaning for prime potency and if then we are to affirm the reality of this meaning, we must work from within a pattern of consciousness which is determined by theoretical concerns and interests: a desire for experiences of understanding and truth which stand on their own and which can withstand any criticisms that might be made of them. Hence, when we encounter experiences in sense data which we cannot understand, when we begin to think about differing experiences of time and place which we have but for which no explanation can be given, when inverse acts of understanding indicate to us that an anticipated specification of meaning is not to be found within a given set or assembly of sense data, we alight upon a species of sense data with points to the existence of an empirical remainder: an un-understandable within the data of sense

experiential conjugate. It is something which we know about from a reflection that analytically works from experiences of change as these occur in the experience that we have of the world and of ourselves (in the changes which occur within our inner lives). One thing ceases to be as it becomes another. Some things die that other things might live.³⁸ In the order of being or reality (and by means of an order that we find within the pattern of our acts that is constitutive of our human cognition), potency refers to what can become something else. It exists as a species of *ens quo* (as “a being by which”).³⁹ It is that which can receive an identity or an actuation of some kind (now at one time or now at some other time).

Potency as Passive and Potency as Active

which exists as an empirical residue. Some experiences of data that are given to us in our acts of sense can be found to contain a meaning that exists within them. For a somewhat simple and even trite example, we can think about a lecture which we can hear another give and what we hear can make sense to us. A meaning is conveyed to us through audible sounds. However, we can also distinguish sights or sounds that have no meaning for us or which can have no meaning for other human subjects. And so, in this context of meaning and reflection, we can come to know about a species of data in sense which specifically and only exists as an empirical residue and, when we think about this empirical residue, we can move toward an understanding and a knowledge of it which is able to speak about prime matter or prime potency (the possible existence of prime matter or the possible existence of prime potency). Prime matter or prime potency cannot be directly known through any of our acts of sense nor through any combination which can exist in our acts of sense. However, in our understanding or through our analytic understanding, we can encounter a meaning which we can speak about in language which refers to presences of prime matter or presences of prime potency. Then, if we want to know if prime potency exists *as a reality*, as a truthful explanatory principle, through our self-understanding and judgment, we can go back and advert to our acts of sensing, questioning, thinking, and understanding in a comparison of them that attends to the transitions which occur as we move from our acts of sense towards our later acts of understanding. We notice that a one to one correlation does not exist between what is sensible in our acts of sense and what is intelligible in our acts of understanding. Every act of understanding transcends the data that is given to us in our acts of sense and what exists merely as data and without any determination is what is known when we refer to the existence of prime matter.

In this regard when we compare acts of sense with acts of understanding, Aquinas used to speak about how every act of understanding exists as a species of reduction. From an experience of sensible multiplicity and through understanding, we move into an experience of intelligible unity. Acts of understanding exist to indicate how a given datum of sense is connected or is united in some way to another given datum of sense. Through our understanding, we discover meanings which exist as invariant determinations relative to the differences and shifts in determination which we find in our experience of sense data (differences which exist at the level of sense). Galileo's law for the free fall of falling objects near the earth has been verified in more than one place and at more than one time. However, our understanding has not been able to reduce every experience of difference (initially known at the level of sense) into a unity which exists at a higher, intelligible level unless we think about a solution which can possibly exist for us vicariously if we think about the possible existence of an unrestricted act of understanding which could belong to a being that exists in a manner which radically differs from how, as human beings, we happen to exist and how, as human beings, we happen to think, understand, and known. In the unrestrictedness of an unrestricted act of understanding, no

Simply as given, potency accordingly refers or simply exists as a passive principle.⁴⁰ As a passive principle of life and existence, it is that which can possibly receive. It exists as a principle of reception and so, *whenever a reception or the possibility of a reception is encountered in anything which exists, we can properly speak about potency* (the presence of potency). Something exists in a state of potency in terms of how it could be connected or how it could be related to something else which is other than potency [“potency is known by way of act; it is ordered to act”]⁴¹ and, at the same time, although *from another perspective*, the same thing (a given thing) is not in a state or condition of potency when it is viewed in terms of how it is already in act: already related to some other thing or some other event. In anything that is known by us as human beings through our human acts of cognition (which combine our acts of sensing with our acts of understanding), potency and absence of potency always exist

experience of difference exists without some possible reason: an explanation which reveals connections or points of unity which cannot be grasped by our human acts of understanding.

In these matters, we can recall an insight which comes to us from St. Augustine: nothing happens in our world in a manner which lies outside a divine scheme of things. Cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 3, 1, 9. Everything happens within the context which is known and which is specified by a divine act of understanding. In prime matter or prime potency, we can speak about a species of being which exists as the lowest realm, sphere, or level of being. Cf. *Insight*, p. 468. As we have noted, this species of being is not known by us through any act of sense which we can have in this life although we can know about it through inferences and a conclusion which refers to an act of reflective understanding (an understanding which is to be identified with judgment). Through our judgments (whether we speak about the reality of prime potency or the reality of every other kind of being), being (real being) is known by us and not by any other means which would refer to any other kind of cognitional act.

38*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 19, a. 9; q. 48, a. 2, ad 3. For an analysis of Aristotle's notion of matter which distinguishes between a descriptive notion of matter and an explanatory notion of matter, see Patrick H. Byrne's “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” *Loneragan Workshop*, vol. 8, ed. Fred Lawrence (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990): pp. 9-11. As Byrne explains, it is all too easy to conceive of matter as something that we can imagine or see as some kind of extended “stuff.” We can think of it as some kind of “underlying material” which receives determinations of one kind or another as forms come and go, succeeding and replacing each other. But, if we conceive of matter as a datum or as a term of our intellectual consciousness (as distinct from a conception of matter which sees it as a datum or term of sense), if it is considered from a vantage point that is conditioned by our acts of understanding, we should realize that matter refers to whatever is being supposed by the presence of any form (form referring to a presence of intelligibility). In other words, matter exists as a principle of presupposition (it exists as an indeterminate principle of presupposition). It is “whatever is presupposed: by the presence of any given form and this supposition or presupposition would vary as we move from form to form and as we think about the meaning of different forms.” Instead of proposing a translation of Aristotle which would suggest that *hupokeimenon* and *hupokeisthai* refer to an “underlying material,” it is better to think in terms of “an x which is presupposed by saying, 'x becomes.’” The indeterminacy of “x” is known if we compare it and contrast it with the the lack of indeterminacy which exists in the presence of a form (form existing as a principle of determinacy). Hence, in Aristotle's understanding about how the being of things emerges in their reality, the indeterminacy of matter refers to whatever is needed if a form is to have full being. Cf. Byrne, p. 11.

together.⁴² Whenever anything is known in a human way (acts of sensing joining acts of understanding), a material component is known in terms of how it is joined with an intellectual or formal component which functions as a principle of determination and identity. A presence of potency refers to a possible presence of form and, conversely, the absence of any potency refers to a presence of form (of which there can be many different specifications).⁴³ In the language which we can find in Aristotle: "...the proximate matter and the form are one and the same thing, the one potentially, and the other actually....for each thing is a unity, and the potential and the actual are somehow one."⁴⁴ Something which exists lacking a degree of indetermination exists in a manner which is partially lacking in potency (it is not to be equated with any possible instance or experience which refers to what would exist as pure potency). But, this lack of potency, as a relativity (as a relative lack of potency), in

Since what will be needed at any given time will vary as we think about the possible reception or presence of different forms, the meaning of any given instance of matter will always depend on how it relates or is joined to a given form. In the world that is given to us through our acts of experiencing, understanding, and judging, every instance of matter will exist in a manner which points to its lack of indeterminacy, a lack of indeterminacy which is signified or pointed out through the presence of a form that banishes the presence of any indeterminacy.

Hence, with Aristotle, we can speak about matter and form as if it exists as "one and the same thing." Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 8, 1045b18-19. Matter, as it is specified by any given form, exists as a concretization or as the actualization of a specific form. Cf. Byrne, p. 11. If it is considered apart from its union with any form, if matter is thought about in terms which refer to pure matter or prime matter, it would exist as something which could be related to any given form. In this condition, it would not be united or joined to the presence of any form, form existing as an intelligible distinct metaphysical principle.

³⁹Lonergan, *Early Works*, p. 132.

⁴⁰See Krapiec, "What are Potency and Act?", <http://ptta.pl/pef/haslaen/a/actpotency.pdf> (April 21, 2012). Hence, if potency always refers to something that is always strictly potential and which always awaits some form of realization, it can be referred to as something which is intrinsically or inherently passive. The passivity is purely receptive or perhaps we can say in another way that it is merely receptive. When we refer, for instance, to our acts of sense, we can say that their passivity is "merely receptive". Cf. Vertin, "Judgments of Value," p. 226.

⁴¹Krapiec, "What are Potency and Act?", <http://ptta.pl/pef/haslaen/a/actpotency.pdf> (April 21, 2012). Hence, we can speak about the objectivity of a given potency (the reality of a given potency) when we can speak about an "objectivity of possibility" which really belongs to it and which is known if we can refer to an act or operation which is proportionate or correspondent to the existence of a given potency. Cf. Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 43, as quoted by Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 37. *Proprius actus fit in propria potentia* [a specific act occurs in its specific potency]. Cf. *Verbum*, p. 145. Hence, a definition for potency can be simply given which says that we have potency if we have the "possibility of act." Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 37. We recall that, in the line of analysis which we have from the thinking of Aristotle and Aquinas, we come to know about the real existence of certain potencies if we begin from objects that are intended and, then from these objects, we move toward acts and then, from acts, we move toward potencies (toward a knowledge about what something is able to do or able to receive).

⁴²Understanding never emerges from a context that is entirely devoid of understanding. Certain things are already understood by us and no questions need be asked in inquiry in order to move from a relative absence of understanding toward an experience that adds to our understanding. We

turn determines or sets conditions for new, later possibilities of reception: different degrees or refinements of receptivity and different kinds or types of receptivity. In other words, the existence of later, newer potencies is conditioned and partially determined by what is already lacking in potency (or, in other words, by what already exists in terms of some kind of actuality that is present within a potency, existing as an actuation or as an absence of potency).⁴⁵

If, for instance, we should turn more fully to what happens within us in our human cognition, within the order of our human cognition as we initially engage in acts of fantasy and imagination, apt images or apt phantasms can be distinguished from every other kind of image or phantasm which we can sense or imagine since apt images present an ordered configuration of parts or elements which exists in a manner that is constitutive of their signification (the ordering constitutes their signification) and this ordering encourages the possible reception of a direct act of understanding. A partial absence of potency (a partial presence of determination) which is thus present in some images accordingly creates conditions for a species of reception which, otherwise, would not exist if we were to advert to images and phantasms which we can experience or imagine but which would be lacking in any correlations or configurations that, in some way, suggest the possible presence of an intelligible order which can be grasped by a direct act of understanding. If, on the one hand thus, pure potency refers to a condition of pure indeterminacy which is to be equated with a condition of unrestricted openness (an openness which is to be equated with a condition of unrestricted receptivity), every other kind of potency,⁴⁶ as it is related to or as it is informed in some way by the presence of a form or a shape or a

recall here a precept that comes to us from Aristotle who had noted that, in our learning, we always move from what we know to what we do not know and have yet to know.

43In this context, whenever we want to think about the kind of relation which exists between potency and form, we can recall Lonergan's words given in *Insight*, p. 534, where it is said about potency that it is the "capacity to come under law." If we want to speak about potency having a form or nature, we say that it exists as an openness that is orientated to the possible reception of a form.

44Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 8, 1045b18-21. Cf. Krismer, "Lecture Introducing Metaphysical Principles." Krismer quotes this passage but gives a different bibliographical reference.

45Please note thus that potencies of any kind can only be known if we refer to what is not in potency (to what already exists as some kind of act or determination, an act or determination which is not itself in a condition of potency). If, for instance, we want to talk about passive potencies and different kinds of passive potency, an understanding of them supposes an understanding which knows about the existence of active potencies which exist as acts, actions, or operations which come from without to indicate the presence of a passive potency which is being brought into a condition of act. For instance, in our human understanding, intelligence in act (intellect in act) or agent intellect (which exists as a received act of understanding) acts on our possible or potential intellects to bring them from a condition of potency to a condition of act. The reception of an act of understanding allows us to distinguish between what is in act and what is in potency. To understand any kind of potency which can exist as a principle of reception (as some kind of passive potency), we must refer to prior presences of act which must first exist and which we must first know and experience before we can speak about the presence of any kind of potency.

46Please note that, if we think about how prime matter or pure potency is to be distinguished from the existence of potencies as these exist within our given concrete world, we can understand why Aquinas would want to speak about how matter and form always exist together initially (at the very beginning of things) and not in a condition which would suppose an initial separate existence for each and a later joining of the two into a union which, before, had not existed. If, in our contingent world,

configuration which exists within the concrete order of things, is to be regarded as referring to a general principle of limitation. The condition of every relative potency, as it exists within our concrete world, limits the number and kind of actualizations which are possible for it.⁴⁷

To explain this matter a bit more thoroughly by using a few examples, questioning, for example, exists as an act. We can distinguish between the operative potency of our being able to ask questions or a habit of asking questions (which also exists as a species of operative potency) and the active potency which exists in our asking questions in distinct acts (in distinct operations).⁴⁸ When, from a potency or a possibility to ask questions, questions are in fact asked, in this activity a given potency is being reduced to act. Aquinas uses this kind of language in speaking about these kinds of transitions. In

matter and form always exist together (nothing exists in a condition of pure indeterminacy), we can speak about the concreation or *concreatum* of matter and form. "Matter and form are always already internally related." Cf. Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, p. 180. Hence, if this is the case, we cannot speak about a prior existence of matter and a later reception of form by matter in a context of meaning which points to a congregation or *congregatum*. Aquinas rejects this thesis as we find it proposed in the thought of Ibn Rushd [Averroes] (1126-1198). If we think about the principle of *concreatum* and if we understand its meaning in a way which points to a natural suitability or a natural orientation which exists, for instance, between matter and form (as realities, matter and form suppose each other or they mutually rely on each other), we can understand why we can then proceed to argue that "sensuality and rationality are naturally suited to relate harmoniously with each other." Cf. Kerr, p. 180. If matter and form exist together in a form of mutual ordering which each has (one to the other), the same can be said about human beings and the relation which exists between the body and the soul of every human being. Each needs each other. Each exists together with the other and it is not necessary to suppose, as Giles of Rome (c. 1250-1306/9) does, that they have to be brought together through a form of congregation which exists as an *aggregatum* (as an aggression). A union of opposites is allegedly imposed from without and, hence, we must speak about a mode of operation which is not natural or intelligible but which is violent. Through various ascetical practices that we can imagine and employ, we can control our passions: in other words, by violent means, "we achieve self-mastery by submitting our sensuality to our reason." Cf. Kerr, p. 181.

47In the kind of language which Lonergan uses in *Insight*, p. 468, to speak about these matters: "...the yes of judgment is restricted to the formulation it affirms; and this formulation results from an insight [an act of direct understanding] that is restricted to the pattern of the data to be understood." In potency, in the meaning of potency and in the existence of potency, we can find a "universal principle of limitation" as this exists within our world: the world which we know through our contingent acts of sensing, questioning, thinking, understanding, and judging.

48See also Aquinas, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, bk. 3, ch 8, where a second real distinction is adverted to when he notes that our ability or our potency to ask questions is not to be identified with a second ability or potency which refers to our being able to receive understandings which meet or answer any questions that we might pose. Our habitual ability to receive understandings of one kind or another exists as a second species of operative potency. As Aquinas speak about this potency and the necessity of our having this species of potency: "Here is a thing that often fosters error; when men are capable to enquiring into things they are not capable of understanding," as quoted by Amerio, p. 350, n. 8. In Amerio's own words: "An intellect can be capable of formulating an objection [this exists as a third operative potency] without being capable of understanding the argument that meets the objection." In attending then to an order which we find within the structure of our human cognition, different operative potencies need to be clearly distinguished from each other as, similarly,

every reduction to act in any given situation, an absence or a lessening of potency is to be admitted. In questioning, a lessening of potency exists. Questioning exists as an act and questioning always takes us beyond an unreflective experience of ignorance when we do not know in a given case that we are ignorant about something which we should know something about. In questioning, in the consciousness which is present in our questioning, we know that we do not know. However, and perhaps paradoxically, questioning, as an act, also exists as a potency (a new potency). Act and potency continually go together to form a unity. Our asking of questions immediately creates a new receptivity within the very asking of our questions (a new passive potency) and, in our questioning, we are now open to acts of thinking and reasoning that are elicited by what we are asking questions about. Questions direct us toward objects of one kind or another (given to us in the data of sense or/and in the

different acts need to be clearly distinguished from each other. An order of real distinctions exists among potencies as these also exist among acts which are to be correlated with the existence of different potencies. The potencies in question all exist in a manner which refers to varying degrees or presences of realization that can exist within them.

Please also note that operative potencies are to be distinguished from active potencies. Active potencies exist as the acts or actions of a subject: acts or actions of a subject which do not refer to acts of being which refer to the existence of a given subject but which, instead, refer to accidental or conjugate acts which subjects do, now at this time or now at this other time. For example, reasoning and thinking exist as active potencies since reasoning and thinking is something that we sometimes do when occasions arise for us (even as we admit that our acts of questioning, reasoning, and thinking are elicited from us by acts, activities, or operations that come to us from points of origin or centers of activity which are external to ourselves in the manner of our personal living). Whenever, as subjects, we engage in transitive activities of one kind or another, by our actions we produce objects which exist for us as the effects of what we do. Active potencies exist as efficient causes.

But, on the other hand, operative potencies are not to be correlated with any acts or activities which we can do as subjects (or which we do as subjects) but, rather, with a species of being (a realization of being) which exists at a lower level. We refer here to what exists for us as a union of accidental conjugate potency with an accidental conjugate form. In this type of situation, operative potencies exist as accidental, conjugate essences. An accidental or conjugate potency has been joined to an accidental or conjugate form. In another way of speaking, we say that, in the order of things, operative potencies exist as first acts (or, if you want, as second potencies) while active potencies exist as second acts. According to a logical or a conceptual order of priority which exists in terms of how we speak about the interrelations which exist among potency, form, and act, active potencies presuppose operative potencies. In moving from an accidental, conjugate potency toward the being of an accidental, conjugate act, an operative potency exists as an intermediary determination. Its potency is less than what we have when we refer to potencies which are to be identified with presences of accidental, conjugate potency. In the absence of any kind of form, potencies always exist in an indeterminate manner. The absence of determination implies an absence of restriction. But, when we turn to accidental, conjugate acts which exist as active potencies, we find a lesser degree of potency as we move from the potency of accidental, conjugate essences toward the potency of accidental, conjugate acts. Whenever we have an action or an operation which is the doing or the activity of a given subject, acts exist which, as acts, are bereft of potency (they are lacking in potency). Act and potency exclude each other if potency refers to what can be or what can possibly exist while act refers simply to what is or to what exists. Hence, in comparing active potencies with operative potencies,

data of our consciousness of self) and, as we attend to these objects and as we begin to play with the data which we are encountering and attending to, acts of thinking and reasoning emerge as both a new specification of act and as a new specification of potency which is grounded in the existence of earlier potencies which also exist as acts. Our acts of thinking and reasoning are receptive in a new way to a new possible reception of acts as these exist, for instance, when we speak about possibly receiving direct acts of understanding. The reception of an initial, direct act of understanding (although an act) in turn exists or it functions as a new specification of potency. Ideas which are understood and grasped in our direct acts of understanding elicit new questions from us which can ask about a possibility of proof and any evidence which can be cited in favor of a judgment which can speak about the reality or the truth of an understood idea. The new line of questioning which emerges exists as a new actuation and also as a new specification of potency since, for instance, from the asking that exists in the presence of new questions, a new species of understanding can be possibly known by us (it can be possibly received by us): an act of understanding which specifically refers to an act of reflective understanding (an act of understanding which exists as a judgment). An inner order relates potencies and acts to each other in an ordination or correspondence which exists among differing acts and differing potencies. Acts exist as potencies (manifesting and creating new potencies) and these same potencies also exist as acts. In the distinction which exists between potency and act and also in the dialectical union which exists between potency and act, we have a first principle (a fundamental first principle) for understanding how or why we may speak about a large number of metaphysical distinctions which, as distinctions, serve to identify a large number of metaphysical principles which differ from each other.⁴⁹

If we want to speak with greater precision about these matters, if we want to distinguish between an act that makes or creates a potency and the concomitant presence of a potency in an act what exists as an openness toward the possible reception of other acts, we can distinguish between two kinds of potency which define each other: presences of operative, active potency (sometimes referred to as efficient potency) and presences of passive, receptive potency⁵⁰ (even as these two kinds of potency apply to the

active potencies are entirely lacking in presences of potency. We can only speak about the potency or the incompleteness of an active potency when we attend to how these potencies, as acts, are related, ordered, or oriented to the being of other possible acts and the reception which is imparted by these other acts. Acts of reasoning are directed toward acts of understanding and direct acts of understanding are oriented toward acts of reflective understanding. Because of a normative form of ordering which exists among a number of distinct acts that are linked to each other, an act that is bereft of potency is given a potency which is ascribed to it. A potency exists here as a function of relations.

⁴⁹Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 42.

⁵⁰Please note that, in distinguishing between different kinds of passive potency, an initial general distinction distinguishes between two basic kinds of passive potency: (1) the possible reception of a form when, through a first actualization or first act, a form is received by something which exists in a purely material way; and (2) the possible reception of an act of being or existence or the possible reception of an act or an operation when, through a second actualization or second act, an act of being or an act of existence or, on the other hand, an act or operation which exists as an act of doing or an act of reception, is received by something which already exists as a union between what exists as a potency and what exists as a specific form. With respect to the being of second acts in contrast with the being of first acts, in a preliminary way, prior presences of form as first act specify or identify what acts of being or what acts of existence are to be properly received by a union which already exists between a potency and the presence of a given form. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 147. The presence of a form suggests the need or the value of an act of being or an act of existence which would exist as a kind

same thing or the same object that, in a given instance, we might want to talk about).⁵¹ An active efficient potency moves towards something that is other than itself. Hence, it is the principle of motion which exists within or in another.⁵² But, as an act or activity, this same potency also exists as a species of passive receptive potency which can receive from something which is other than itself. We accordingly refer to passive potencies as the principle of motion which exists from another.⁵³ As a possible exception to what exists both as an active potency and also as a passive potency, we can perhaps argue that our acts of sensing exist only as passive potencies.⁵⁴ They are actuated by causes that act from without (externally) and so they are not to be regarded as active potencies (as acts which we can will from within ourselves in order to move toward something or to produce something which

of completion for whatever exists initially for us in our understanding as a union of potency and form. If being is inherently or intrinsically intelligible, initial experiences of intelligibility condition an attitude which wants to think that a given meaning should be regarded as a true or real meaning (even as we would need to admit that an act of direct understanding which initially encounters meaning is to be clearly distinguished from an act of reflective understanding which can affirm the truth or the reality of a meaning that has been apprehended by a prior direct act of understanding).

The union which already exists between a potency and a form or the union which would exist between a potency and a form always refers to the presence or the being of an essence of some kind (whether we speak about an essence which refers to the conceptual reality of a thing or substance or an essence which refers to the conceptual reality of accidental, conjugate forms or the conceptual reality of habits of intellect or virtue, accidental conjugate forms and habits of intellect and virtue existing as operative potencies which are ordered toward the kind of being which they can have when we have the kind of actualization which occurs in presences of second act). Cf. Lonergan, *Early Latin Theology*, pp. 129-131.

Within a context which refers to possible presences of first act, whenever a potency is orientated toward receiving an intelligibility which refers to the possible presence of a form (a form which refers to the presence of a possible intelligibility or the presence of a possible meaning), then this type of potency is to be understood as a species of passive potency which refers to what we have when we refer to presences of “essential passive potency.” Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 39; p. 97; p. 311, n. 15: “essential passive potency is constituted by matter.” In the transition which occurs in this context, for the first time, in the presence of a first act, a potency that is entirely lacking in any kind of meaning or intelligibility (a potency which exists without any determination as an instance of prime potency) receives a first or an initial determination that turns a pure potency into either (1) a distinct understood thing or a distinct understood substance (which, in turn, is to be equated with the whatness or the identity of a specific thing or substance) or (2) a distinct sensitive potency which is understood, a distinct intellectual potency which is understood, or a distinct moral potency which is understood (potencies which now, as understood, directly refer to the whatness or the identity of what could be sensing, what could be understanding, and what could be the living of a upright, moral life). Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 145.

With respect to things or substances, the whatness or the identity of a specific thing or substance (when it is conceptualized) refers to the essence of a thing or the essence of a substance. A form, in this context, has been converted or turned into an identifiable substantial or central essence. An essence, as it exists in this context, is to be equated with the conceptual being of a thing, or with the

is other that is being desired by ourselves).⁵⁵ After actuations which occur with respect to our initial acts of sense, in the order of our human inquiry, acts as potencies (or, conversely, potencies as acts) begin to succeed each other in a self-transcending order of acts and potencies which points to a development which exists within our consciousness and a finality which is somehow operative within the context of this development (a finality that is able to explain why shifts in consciousness can occur as one type of potency or act is succeeded or sublated by another species of potency or act). New active and passive potencies come into being because a prior set of conditions have been fulfilled and these conditions refer to a presence of prior acts which can be understood to exist also, in their way, as potencies.⁵⁶

conceptualized thingness of a thing, or with the conceptualized substantiality of a thing which is known as the term of an act of conceptualization. Hence, in this context, we speak about the conceptual being of a specific substance or the conceptual being of a specific thing. In moving then to think, however, about the identity or the whatness of any sensitive potencies, the identity or the whatness of any intellectual potencies, and the identity or the whatness of any moral potencies, in the context of our acts of conceptualization, as terms which accrue to our acts of conceptualization, we find essences which are not to be confused with the essences of substances or the essences of things. A different conceptual species of being belongs to these other essences. Cf. Lonergan, *Early Latin Theology*, p. 131.

However, instead of essences which exist with an orientation that is directed toward second acts which exist as substantial acts of being or substantial acts of existence, these other essences are orientated toward second acts of being which exist as acts, activities, or operations of a given subject (acts, activities, or operations which presuppose prior actuations of being which refer to substantial acts of existence or substantial acts of being as these relate to the being or the existence of a given subject). In speaking thus about two kinds of essential passive potency, one kind is orientated toward the reception of a substantial or central form while the other is orientated toward receiving some kind of accidental conjugate form. Essential passive potencies which are geared to receiving accidental, conjugate forms (which, in turn, are geared to receiving accidental, conjugate acts, activities, or operations that inhere or which belong to a subject) presuppose essential passive potencies which are orientated to receiving forms which are to be equated with a species of intelligible unity which refers to the intelligibility of a thing as a unity or whole or the intelligibility of a substance as a like unity or whole.

The order of dependence which can be found to exist between, say, this essential passive potency and, then, this other essential passive potency accordingly explains why an essential passive potency can be remotely related to a realization of first act in a given instance of first act while, on the other hand, another essential passive potency is proximately related to a realization which occurs in a given instance of first act. Cf. Lonergan, *Early Latin Theology*, p. 131. Prime potency exists most remotely as an essential passive potency since prime potency can be informed by the presence of any kind of form which could be given to it or which could come to it. In prime potency, we have a complete absence of any kind of determination. In prime potency, no exigence exists and no need exists for the presence of any kind of form (or, alternatively, the realization of any kind of act: whether we speak about first acts or second acts). And so, what exists without any kind of determination or restriction is something which can be determined by the reception of any kind of intelligible order or form which could directly come to it from without in a specification of first act (from any kind of external source, whether we speak about a source which exists within nature or a source which could

A cycle of recurrence can be detected which allows us to say that, from one aspect or perspective, a given passive potency exists as a passive potency and that, from another aspect or perspective, a given passive potency also exists as an active potency. The activity present in an active potency presents itself as a new principle of reception. Whenever passive potencies are actualized through new receptions of one kind or another, new active potencies emerge (they are elicited) and, in and through the presence or the actualization of new active potencies, new passive potencies come into being in a cycle that can repeat itself in a manner which moves us into higher orders of meaning which, in turn, reveal to us higher orders of being.⁵⁷

Again, to explain what all this means a bit more concretely (despite the dangers of repetition), think

possibly exist without nature or beyond nature). However, as we move from prime potency as an essential passive potency toward other essential passive potencies, we find that an order exists among a chain of essential passive potencies (a succession which moves from one species of essential passive potency to another species of essential passive potency on eventually to a specific proximate essential passive potency which is immediately ordered toward an appropriate first act which it could receive). A given essential passive potency can be both proximate and remote with respect to how it may be ordered or how it may be related to a given instance of first act.

To understand this ordering, we say that prime potency always exists as a proximate essential potency if we attend to an initial form which this prime matter can initially receive as a first determination or first act which joins a potency to a form (introducing a degree of determination into the indeterminateness of prime potency, abolishing the presence of this indeterminateness). However, if we have an initial determination which has converted the essential passive potency of prime matter into another species of essential passive potency that is now lacking in a degree of indeterminateness, we now have a new essential passive potency which is not to be confused with the aforementioned essential passive potency of prime potency. This new essential passive potency is proximately related or it is proximately ordered toward receiving another new form or another new determination of intelligibility in a species of first act which jives both with the degree of indeterminateness and the degree of determinateness which also exists when we think about what could be existing as a given essential passive potency. A proportionate relation exists between the receptivity which exists within a given essential passive potency and the species of form which this potency is able properly to receive in first act (and which it should receive in the normal course of things).

At any given time or in any given situation, we can distinguish between a remote essential passive potency and a proximate essential passive potency by saying that proximate essential potencies are disposed or suited to receiving a particular specification of form or a specification of intelligibility and not some other specification of form or some other specification of intelligibility. An essential passive potency is proximate “if it needs no further determination to render it capable of receiving” a new first act. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 146. As we have already noted, any given essential passive potency can exist both as a remote passive potency and as a proximate passive potency. A remote essential passive potency can be orientated toward a species of first act which exists as a remote and ultimate end, relative to the being of a given remote essential passive potency. Hence, if a remote essential passive potency is receptive to a species of first act which exists as a remote end or as a complete later fulfillment of itself (reducing what exists as a potency to a condition of act), actualizations of intermediate proximate essential passive potencies will be needed if a remote essential passive potency is to be actuated by the presence of a remote end or a remote objective. In the process, we

about an idea which comes to a person in the context of an act of direct understanding which has been duly received. If it is not known whether or not a given idea is a true idea or a false idea, if a given idea needs to be evaluated to see if it points to a truth or if it exists as a truth (if it is to be regarded as a decent or good idea), then, prior to the reception of reflective act of understanding which can say that a given idea is to be regarded as a true idea or a false idea, the idea or intelligibility that exists as the term and realization of an initial act of understanding properly exists also as a potency. It is to be viewed and known as a potency. In the traditional language of metaphysics, what is sensed apart from the presence of any kind of understanding refers to a “first potency” and what is understood apart from any act of reflective understanding refers to a “second potency.”⁵⁸ Hence, as this example illustrates, something which has not existed as a potency and which has not been viewed as a potency in a given

move from remote essential passive potencies toward essential passive potencies that are less and less remote.

As a way of illustrating these transitions, Stebbins argues, quoting Lonergan, that the [human] body exists as a proximate essential passive potency relative to the reception of a spiritual [human] soul. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, pp. 146-147. However, if the human body exists as a proximate essential passive potency (or more simply as a proximate passive potency), remote essential passive potencies can also be distinguished. Organic compounds exist as remote passive potencies (relative to the reception of a spiritual soul by a body) although organic compounds exist as proximate passive potencies (relative to the reception of a first act which refers to the form of a material body). However, subatomic particles can be seen to exist as proximate passive potencies (relative to the first act or form of organic compounds) although these same subatomic particles also exist as remote passive potencies relative to what we have when we think about the forms of bodies and souls.

Please note, however, that, to avoid any possible confusion here about the meanings of form and essence, please recall how we should distinguish between an act of understanding, on the one hand, and an act of conceptualization, on the other hand, if, respectively, we are to distinguish between what is meant by a form and what is meant by an essence. Acts of direct understanding apprehend the meaning of forms (meanings or intelligibilities as these exist embedded within matter amid material conditions). But then, from our prior acts of direct understanding, acts of conceptualization emerge in a manner which joins a meaning or an intelligibility (which exists as a form) with a universalized specification of matter which has taken similar particular instances of matter and which has then converted them into a specification which refers to an apprehension of common matter (common matter as distinct from particular matter). Form and essence are distinguished from each other because of a difference which exists between a direct act of understanding and an act of conceptualization which proceeds from a prior direct act of understanding.

But if, on the other hand, the potency in question refers to an orientation which is not geared toward the possible reception of a first act but which is geared toward the possible reception of a second act which exists as an act of being or an act of existence (acts of being or existence existing either as mere acts of being or existence or as acts of being or existence which refer to activities or operations and which presuppose mere acts of being or existence), then, in this context, we speak about a species of passive potency which refers to presences of “accidental passive potency.” Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, pp. 39-40; p. 97 & n. 11. In our contingent world, a given thing or a given being can exist or it might not exist (it might not exist in any kind of real way). The real being of any given thing or the real being of any given act, activity, or operation) is to be clearly distinguished from a species of

context of meaning becomes a potency when it is considered with respect to how it can be related to the determining influence of something which is other than itself. The something other exists as some other meaning or some other variable. Potency exists or it varies because of or as a consequence of changes in relations that arise when new variables or new meanings enter into a given equation (or situation) to change it from within in a manner which directs our attention to how changes in relations effect changes in the constitution of the different elements, parts, or variables which can be found in the context of a new equation (a new relation of parts or elements that constitutes a new whole). What does not exist as a potency in one sense becomes a potency in another sense if we think about something other which can be added to it (a something other which does not exist as an absence of determination) and, conversely, what exists as a potency ceases to exist as a potency when a

being which refers to a conceptual or a hypothetical form of being. From any knowledge that we might have about the essence of a contingent thing or the essence of a contingent event, act, activity, or operation, we cannot conclude to the necessity or to the reality of any kind of real existence (although we can always conclude that whatever enjoys possible or hypothetical being could always possibly exist in some kind of real way). In themselves, hypothetical natures always exist as mental or conceptual beings. Possible or conceptual reality exists in a way which is other than any kind of reality which is real (real because informed by acts of being or acts of existence which come to it from without to effect a transition which moves something from a condition of conceptual being to a condition of real being). An external condition or an external circumstance of some kind accounts for instances of real being (whether we refer to the being of a thing or the being of a substance or if we proceed to speak about the being of an act or the being of an operation that a given thing or substance is able to do or to receive).

Hence, if requisite external conditions or requisite external circumstances are always present within a given context, what exists as a substantial union of form and matter will enjoy real being (its real existence) and, in addition, when we advert to the necessity of other external conditions (the necessary presence of other external circumstances), we say the same thing about the presence of acts or operations. When light is present and nothing obstructs its presence for us and when our healthy human eyes are open, we always see. Our acts or operations are normally and typically operative. They are not operative if, by chance or *per accidens*, the required external conditions are not, in fact, given or if, in some way, they are not present. While actuations of essential passive potency (existing as first act) presuppose presences of material conditions and only this kind of presence, actuations of accidental passive potency (existing as second act) presuppose (1) everything which must be given when we think about the real being of things or the real being of substances (which, as existing, exist as potential subjects of action and also as potential receptions of action) and (2) the kind of presence which is also needed when we think about the meaning and being of accidental, conjugate potencies and the meaning and being of accidental, conjugate forms. Far less is presupposed when we think about the actuation of an essentially passive potency which exist as first acts than when we think about the actuation of accidental passive potencies which exist as second acts. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 311, n. 15.

With respect to the enduring existence of intelligibilities which refer to possible, hypothetical, or conceptual forms of being and the circumstantial nature of real being (all instances of real being), please recall here a teaching that comes to us from Plato (a teaching which had been also accepted by Aristotle and which was also retained by Aquinas) to the effect that, as ideas, forms or intelligibilities always exist in an eternal way (although, admittedly, in explaining the being of forms or the being of

determination of some kind is added to it.

Potency as Natural Potency or Potency as Nature

Natural potency can be accordingly distinguished from absences of natural potency if we can speak about a species of reception which refers to the receptivity of *finite* potencies and how *finite* potencies are receptive to the actions of *finite* agents (the finite active potency of a finite agent acting at this time within this given set of circumstances and the finite active potency of this other finite agent acting at this other time within this other set of circumstances).⁵⁹ Between a finite passive potency and a finite active potency which exists as the acts of a finite agent or finite subject, an order of realization exists

intelligibilities, we are tempted to think about the possible existence of acts of direct understanding which, in their own way, would be wholly lacking in any form or kind of contingency). Based on what we know about our own acts of understanding, eternally existing ideas necessarily suppose points of origin which refer to eternally existing acts of direct understanding.

51 In an example which can be taken from Aquinas, understanding, as an act, always exists as a reception (as a passive act). No act of human willing ever produces acts of understanding. And, once an act of understanding has been received, it exists as a passive potency since every finite act of understanding can always be added to or augmented through the reception of new act of understanding. As an exception, an act of understanding which is infinite or unrestricted in scope and depth is an act which is entirely lacking in any potency. However, if, in a given person, a habitual form of understanding can be found to exist (if a habit of understanding has arisen over time with respect to dealing with a characteristic species of problem, a particular set of difficulties), in any subsequent learning which can possibly occur in such a situation, a person applies what he or she already knows rather than engage in activities that seek to uncover meanings which are wholly new and unfamiliar. If we look, for instance, at the understanding which teachers possess in instructing their students, a teacher commonly already understands the why and what of the subject matter which is to be taught. But, if students are to grow in their personal understanding of this or that subject matter, a teacher works from his or her understanding of things to determine apt images or phantasms which should be presented to students in the hope that appropriate acts of understanding will be given to them as proper receptions (as passive acts). Cf. Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 171. In this type of situation, understanding (a habit of understanding) functions as an activity and not as a reception and as a consequence of this difference, instead of being a passive potency, the understanding which is present now functions as an active potency. Cf. Lonergan, *Verbum*, pp. 149-150; Patrick H. Byrne, "The Thomist Sources of Lonergan's Dynamic World-view," *The Thomist* 46 (1982): 128. In knowing how to deal expeditiously with a particular type of problem, our understanding cannot be purely potential nor, admittedly can it be fully actual. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 74, 8-17; *De Veritate*, q. 19, a. 1; *Sentencia Libri De anima*, 3, 8, 700-704. From the habitual understanding which thus exists, say, in the understanding of an artist or craftsman, an analogy presents itself for understanding a similar wisdom which exists in God as Creator who, as a divine artist or craftsman, always knows what he is about in the governance which he exercises in the kind of causality which God exercises as the first cause or principle of all things which exist. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 9, a. 1, ad 2.

Our understanding is not purely potential since, in the storehouse or repository of our understanding, acts and contents of understanding have accumulated to reveal how much we already know about a particular topic or question. In any instance of new learning, an understanding about what had not been previously understood proceeds from an understanding of things that we already

which is appropriately finite (appropriately finite because proportionately finite). The action of a specific finite agent cause is ordered to the actuation of a specific finite natural potency and, if we attend to any absences of indetermination (or any limited presences of determination) which exist with respect to specific finite natural potencies, we find that these potencies are all ordered to actuations that come to them from finite points of origin which refer to the being and action of specific finite natural agent causes (agent causes which can be spoken about in words which refer to presences of finite agent object). One kind of finite agent cause actualizes a corresponding species of finite potency and other kinds of finite agent cause actualize other kinds of finite potency.

To explain why natural potency and nature refer to the same thing (why they have the same meaning),

have. From a plenum which already exists, we draw on remembered experiences of understanding either to construct new phantasms which are needed to apply one's present understanding and knowledge in a new way to a new configuration of external sense data or we construct new phantasms which can more easily suggest additional insights that are now needed to deal with variations in subsequent problems and difficulties as they have arisen. For any increments in understanding whatever and even also for any increments that augment the presence of any habitual understanding in us, as Aquinas himself notes and as we should know on the basis of our own experience, new phantasms or images are always needed. We cannot do without them. Cf. *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 2, ad 5; *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 2, ad 7 (1ae ser.). However, in the presence of any intellectual habits which we may have, the understanding which comes to us should emerge in a less haphazard way because of a routine or disposition which has formed (a routine or disposition which has acted to construct a new mental or intellectual habit which possesses a stability or fixity that is typical of habits in general). Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 87, a. 2. Since habitual understanding serves as a basis for accelerating the achievement of new, subsidiary insights, its degree of incompleteness accordingly explains why habitual understanding is not to be equated with the presence of complete or full understanding in a given situation. In understanding and knowing, habitual understanding enjoys a status which is intermediate and as a consequence, in every transition which occurs in any growth in understanding and knowing which occurs, as our habitual knowing shifts into actual knowing, habit is always being reduced to act. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 11, a. 5, ad 2.

⁵²Please note that, in the context of Aquinas's thought, an active potency is to be understood as a power or faculty which, through an act which exists as an action (as a species of incomplete act which exists as the transitive act of a subject), a transition is effected which moves someone or something from a condition of potency to a condition of act. Cf. Krapiec, "What are Potency and Act?", <http://ptta.pl/pef/haslaen/a/actpotency.pdf> (April 21, 2012). However, as a source of difficulties and as Lonergan argues in *Verbum*, pp. 121-128: Aquinas employs and works with two distinct meanings for *potentia activa* (literally, "active potency"). Cf. Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, pp. 539-541. See also Patrick H. Byrne, "The Thomist Sources of Lonergan's Dynamic World-view," *The Thomist* 46 (1982): 126-128. One meaning derives from Aristotle; the other, from Avicenna.

With respect to an Aristotelian understanding of active potency as "efficient potency" (as distinct from an Avicennist understanding of active potency), active potency is to be understood in terms which refer to what is understood when we think about the workings of efficient potency and how, in efficient potency, we have a relation which exists between a cause and an effect that is, in some way, caused or produced by an operative cause. Efficient potency exists as an active or transitive principle of movement which exists within things (versus the operation of a passive principle of movement which also exists within things) and this principle of movement exists within nature (*natura*)

it is to be noted, first, that natural potency is to be distinguished from prime potency. In prime potency or prime matter, no orientation or ordination exists with respect to the possible reception of any given species of form which would exist as a species of first act or first realization. Second, natural potency exists as a determination or as a specification of potency as these potencies are known by us in a context which refers to our acts of experiencing, understanding, and knowing. A given determination of potency is receptive to a specific determination of form which is, in turn, receptive to an act of being or an act or operation which is specified by the presence of a given form. As a specification of passive potency, a natural potency (or whatever exists as a specification of natural potency) is disposed to receiving actualizations that belong to the same order of being. Perhaps we can speak about an order of being which exists within the same horizon: a specific gradation of being which refers to a distinct

as a subdivision within a more general principle which refers to nature and whatever we would want to regard as natural (being in a state of nature or existing in a natural kind of way). As the “principle of motion or change in another as it is other,” we can refer to efficient potency as a way which allows us to speak about presences or actualizations of efficient cause. Cf. Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 121; p. 314.

With respect to a meaning for efficient potency which is more specific, we can say that, when something acts as an efficient potency, it produces a change in something else which is other or in oneself as other. Heating or cutting refers to an instance of efficient potency and what is heated or what is cut refers to an instance of receptive potency. Cf. *Verbum*, p. 122. In Aristotle's understanding of efficient potency, this type of potency cannot be understood apart from a correlative meaning for receptive potency (and vice versa). Efficient and receptive potency define each other. In Lonergan's choice of words, “there can be no potency to receive unless there is a prior potency to produce.” Cf. *Early Latin Theology*, p. 133. Efficient potency does not refer to a change or a principle of movement which exists within a thing in terms of a change which occurs simply within the selfhood of a thing (in the self as self). If we want to talk about a presence of efficient potency within a self or a thing, one part of the self or thing must be in a condition which refers to a presence of efficient potency and another part of the self or thing must be in a condition which refers to a presence of receptive potency. The self or thing, simply as self or thing, cannot be in a condition of efficient potency and, at the same time, be also in a condition of receptive potency. But, on the other hand, nature or natural potency can refer to a principle of motion which can possibly refer to a change that exists in something which exists as other or it can also refer to a change that exists simply within a given thing. Put more simply, by way of contrast, nature is said to refer to a “principle of motion in that in which the motion occurs.” Cf. *Verbum*, p. 314. Nature is “a principle of action in the selfsame.” Cf. Byrne, p. 127. Nature or natural potency can be contrasted with efficient potency when we speak about nature as simply referring to a principle of motion which exists within a given thing. A lack of generality exists with respect to efficient potency when the meaning of efficient potency is compared to the meaning which exists when we want to speak about what is meant by nature or natural potency.

Moving on then with respect to a second meaning for *potentia activa* which comes to us from the philosophy of Avicenna, in this context, *potentia activa* simply refers to a principle of action or operation which does not necessarily involve or produce any “an ulterior effect” although it could cause or produce an ulterior effect. Cf. *Verbum*, p. 126. Avicenna's notion of active potency works with a meaning which resembles Aristotle's understanding of nature or natural potency which, in a restricted sense, refers to a principle of action or movement which exists within things (a principle of movement or change which can refer to a change which occurs within a thing or a self as a thing or a self as it exists in itself). In this context, active potency is to be identified with form (form as natural

order within being (among other possible orders of being). We attend to forms or to acts of being which are as natural as those which refer to the being of natural potencies. The forms and the acts of being are all proportionately or correspondently natural.⁶⁰ Natural potencies which can be known by us through our acts of sensing, understanding, and judging are actuated by natural acts which are known by us through our acts of sensing, understanding, and judging (whether we speak about possible presences of natural form as specifications of first act, or whether we go on to speak about possible presences of second acts which refer to acts of being or acts of existence). Acts of being or existence can refer natural acts of being or natural acts of existence (a given thing exists) or, possibly, acts of being or existence refer to a naturally existing action or a naturally existing operation which could be the act or the operation of an externally existing agent object who exists as some kind of a subject or

potency). Cf. Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 539, citing Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 1 c. In the same context (in Avicenna), since, in Aristotle, nature refers not only to the principle of motion which exists within a given thing but also to the principle of rest which also exists within a given thing, nature is to be identified not only with presences of active potency as this exists in various specifications of form but also with presences of passive potency which can refer to presences of matter which exist within a given thing when we refer to material conditions of one kind or another. When reading into Aquinas's texts, we find that Avicenna's notion of active potency is used in different places and that, in other places, Aristotle's notion of efficient potency is employed in a manner which refers to how active potencies are to be understood. Aquinas works with two these different meanings and only the context of his discussions indicates which meaning is being used and which is not being used. In our understanding of Aquinas, we can only try to determine the understanding which Aquinas is attempting to express, employing a manner of conceptualization which is more consistent than what we find when we attend to the language of Aquinas's expression.

53Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 539. In the type of language which Lonergan uses here, he summarizes how Aquinas would have understood how Aristotle would have understood how we are to distinguish between what exists as an active potency and what exists as a passive potency.

54With respect, for instance, to our experience of consciousness with respect to our acts of sensing and our later acts of imagining, in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2, ad 3 and later in 2a2ae, q. 173, a. 2, see how Aquinas distinguishes between images or phantasms which are merely received by us through our acts of sense (in our conscious awareness which we have of them) and other images or phantasms which are formed by us when we picture or imagine something that we no longer sense or which we would like to sense or experience. When speaking about our human imagination and what it does when we engage in imagining acts, we say here, with Aquinas, that our human imagination is to be regarded as an active, efficient potency. Previously in 1a, q. 77, a. 3, Aquinas had distinguished between the presence of a passive or receptive potency and the presence of an active or efficient potency. See also *De Veritate*, q. 16, a. 1, ad 13; *Sententia Libri De anima*, 2, 6, 305; *Quaestio disputata De anima*, a. 1; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 18, a. 2, ad 3. However, in point of contrast, the pure receptivity of sense distinguishes it as essentially a passive or receptive potency (*potentia passiva*). In our sensing, an external object acts from without on our sensing to cause a response in our sensing (a response which refers to an act or an actualization which is present within an act of sense). In a wider, general sense, as a mover, an object (an agent object) either produces or it elicits an act within us. Within a potency, by either of these two ways (directly or indirectly), it can therefore be said, in Lonergan's language, that an agent object "brings about an act." Cf. Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 561.

55Vertin, "Judgments of Value," p. 226. Human sensing is acted upon by external objects in a manner which should be distinguished from any kind of influence that properly *elicits* or *encourages* a

doer of different actions).

A natural potency always exists initially as a species of passive potency. As a passive potency, a natural potency accordingly exists in a condition of rest. It awaits a change which occurs as soon as it is informed from without or as it is actuated by something which is other and which exists in a condition of act (existing in act). But, when a natural potency (as a passive potency) is actuated by something other which exists in a condition of act and this actuation elicits the being of an active potency (converting, say, the passive potency of a natural potency into an active potency which now exists as a new passive potency), we now have a new passive potency which exists as a new specification of natural potency and, in this context, we should also understand why no real distinction

response which would be regarded as a suitable response. What *elicits* or *encourages* a response needs to be distinguished from what *causes*, *effects*, or *imposes* a response. As has been noted previously, our acts of sensing occur without our having to will their individual or several operation. We hear a sound when it is loud enough (when the waves emitted from a source of sound possess sufficient magnitude) and so a sound intrudes into the sphere of our conscious empirical experience. Similarly too, with our eyes, we see colors whenever our eyes happen to be open and when nothing obstructs a presence of external light which is needed as an external condition which must be fulfilled if anything is to be made visible for our potential acts of human seeing. But, in contrast, when we think about actualizations as these refer or as they exist in acts which are constitutive of active potencies, external conditions relate to active potencies in a different way since, in the presence of external conditions (be they one or many), it is always possible that nothing, in fact, will happen. No question, for instance, might be posed or asked about anything that exists as a datum of sense and, if there is no questioning, we cannot assume that any acts of reasoning will follow as a result.

56See Robert Doran, "Preserving Lonergan's Understanding of Thomist Metaphysics: A Proposal and an Example" (an unpublished paper presented at the annual Lonergan Workshop, held at Boston College, Boston, June 15-20, 2008), p. 5, where it is said that, in Lonergan, passive potency and active potency respectively refer to "sublated and sublating operations in intentional consciousness." See also Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 120 where Lonergan speaks about different kinds of questions and how these function as active potencies and levels of consciousness in human beings where the sublation of one level of consciousness by a higher level of consciousness turns a lower level into a passive potency. If, in his own way, Aquinas speaks about passive potencies and active potencies and the relation which exists between them, then, through a transposition of meaning which Lonergan effects in moving from a metaphysical specification of meaning to a specification of meaning that is grounded in human intentionality as this exists with respect to the order of our human knowing, Lonergan respectively speaks about sublated operations and sublating operations. Sublated operations exist as passive potencies and sublating operations as active potencies.

57Please note how active potencies differ from what is in act and from what is in potency. The words themselves suggest that, in an active potency, something is in act and that, at the same time, the same thing is not in act. Or, perhaps we can say that something is both partially in act and partially in potency. If we look at Aquinas's understanding of habitual understanding (a practice of understanding which exists as a habit), he notes that habitual understanding is partially in act and partially in potency. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 74, 8-17; *De Veritate*, q. 19, a. 1; *Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 8, 700-704. In moving from habitual understanding toward actual understanding in any given instance (in any given application), habitual understanding functions as a species and as an instance (an example) of active potency. We work from the understanding which we already have toward a possible addition or an increment in our understanding. When we attend to the kind of consciousness which we

exists between the meaning of natural potency and the meaning of nature. Natural potencies, in their passivity, always exist as a principle of rest; and natural potencies – when they have been acted upon from without to elicit a qualified form of self-movement which refers to the actuation or the activity of an active potency⁶¹ – these always exist as a principle of movement and change within things (changes which move from an initial specification of natural passive potency toward new specifications of natural passive potency). New active potencies create new passive potencies and the presence of new passive potencies creates conditions which lead toward the possible reception of new acts which, in turn, lead to actuations which are to be identified with the presence of new active potencies. The interrelation between passive and active potencies explains why Aristotle's understanding of nature can be applied to what we mean and know when we speak about the intelligibility or the nature of natural potencies (what natural potencies are and how they are to be understood as natures which refer to what

have when we are questioning or reasoning or working toward the possible reception of a new act of understanding from acts of understanding which we already have in our current habitual understanding, we inwardly sense that a potency exists in all these acts, in all these achievements (a potency which refers to a completeness of some kind which has yet to be attained but when needs to be attained if our striving or moving is to come to rest and the kind of repose which exists in rest). Hence, according to how Aristotle defines motion or movement in the *Metaphysics*, 1065b16: motion is “an act that is in potency as such.” Cf. Krapiec, “Reasons for Accepting Act and Potency in Real Beings,” <http://ptta.pl/pef/haslaen/a/actpotency.pdf> (April 21, 2012).

The consciousness which we have, for instance, of a given understanding suggests to us that the understanding which we have needs to become more meaningful or more intelligible if, in some way, we can be blessed with increments in our understanding which will enhance the understanding which we already have (adding to it and increasing it). Our consciousness tells us that, yes, our acts exist as acts and that, in any given act, an absence of potency is to be admitted. In every act, a reduction in potency always occurs (a lessening in potency if not always an abolition or a cessation of potency). The asking of a question (as an act, a realization) always transcends our mere ability or our capacity to ask questions. Acts of reasoning similarly transcend our potency (our ability to engage in acts of reasoning and thinking) and our current understanding (as it exists) also transcends any potency which refers to our ability to experience new acts of understanding which come to us as receptions (as passive acts). With respect to active potencies thus, when we think about a partial composition which exists in terms of potency and act, we can think about an intermediacy which exists in this kind of being (an intermediacy which can be identified as a species of operator in a manner which resembles how Lonergan speaks about operators in the structure of human cognition in *Insight*). Operators function as a species of first principle (relatively speaking) since, through a given operator as this may exist, for instance, in the asking of a question, a shift in cognitive consciousness can be promoted in a way that takes a person from one level or sphere of consciousness to another, higher level of consciousness.

58Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 459, n. 1, where Lonergan distinguishes between first, a *potentia* [potency] to *forma* [form] and second, a *forma* in potency to *operatio* [operation]. In n.1, readers are advised to look at corresponding texts in Aquinas which speak about two kinds of potency: *De Potentia*, q. 1, a. 1 and *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 9, 5, 1828-1829 (Leonine edition).

59Lonergan, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum*, no. 75 and “The Natural Desire to See God,” *Collection*, pp. 81-84, p. 87, cited by Jeremy D. Wilkins, “Finality, History, and Grace: General and Special Categories in Lonergan's Theory of History,” *Wisdom and Holiness, Science and Scholarship: Essays in Honor of Matthew L. Lamb* (Naples, Florida: Sapientia Press, 2007), pp. 393-394.

something is: what it can do given what it happens to be and what it can also experience or receive given what it happens to be).⁶²

In the understanding of nature which we accordingly find in Aristotle and in words which largely parrot the kind of language which Aristotle uses, nature is said to refer to a general principle of motion and rest which exists imminently within things, explaining their inner and exterior movements. This principle is constitutive of things with respect to what things are and what they can do and what they can experience as a consequent of who and what they happen to be.⁶³ What a thing does refers to its active potency (its capacity, orientation, or inclination); what a thing receives refers to its passive potency (which also exists as a capacity or as a species of orientation or inclination). Citing Aristotle's

60Aquinas, *Sententia super Physicam*, 2, 2, 144.

61To avoid any confusion, please distinguish between Plato's understanding of self-movement and Aristotle's understanding of self-movement. In Plato, if the soul is the principle of self-movement in living things, we can say that souls initiate movement as a species of first principle or first cause. Matter is passive and soul, active. However, in Aristotle, while Aristotle does not deny that, in the soul, we find a source or a principle of self-movement (matter is passive; soul is active), he also argues that, because nothing in a condition of potency is able to realize itself, for this reason, soul only functions as a principle of activity if it is first acted upon from without or if it is influenced by the presence or the activity of an extrinsic, external cause which elicits the self-movement which properly or normally belong to the life of a given living being. In Latin: *quidquid movetur ab alio movetur*. "Whatever is moved is moved by another." Cf. Lonergan, *Early Works*, p. 190; p. 658; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1049b24, as cited by Krapiec, "What is the Relation of Potency to Act?", <http://ptta.pl/pef/haslaen/a/actpotency.pdf> (April 21, 2012).

Relative to the form or the soul of a living thing, what exists as a form or a soul exists in a condition of potency until it is actuated by some kind of operation or action which comes to it from outside. In our natural world (and also in our human world), nothing happens simply as a consequence of any form of self-movement (or self-actualization). No potency is able to move itself or to realize itself. No potency moves itself. As Aquinas refers to this principle: *nihil reducitur de potentia in actum nisi per ens in actu*, "nothing can be reduced from potency to act except by a being in act." Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 2, a. 2, as cited by Krapiec. Hence, relative to Aristotle's understanding of self-movement, in Plato, self-movement exists as a species of absolute. Soul is what we refer to when we want to speak about the presence of any self-movement or any forms of self-actualization which seem to exist with respect to the life of a given living being. No other conditions need to be adverted to if we want to speak about presences of self-movement. The nature of a soul as a formal principle explains why certain actions or acts are characteristic of a given living thing. However, in the context of Aristotle's understanding, more variables need to be attended to, identified, verified, and then connected with each other if we are to understand how self-movement exists to some extent within the world of our experience (existing as a species of relative event). Other causes need to be known if we want to hold and to admit that a real distinction always exists between presences of potency and presences of act.

62See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 109, aa. 1-2, on how, between the being and reality of grace which refers to God (the things of God) and the absence of being and reality which refers to the reign of sin in our world (the ubiquitous presence of moral evil within our human world), we have an intermediary principle which refers to presences of nature or natural potency. This nature or natural potency (which exists in us as human beings) can suffer from privations of being which, as

own words: nature is “the principle of movement and rest in a thing in which it is found primarily and *per se*, and not accidentally.”⁶⁴ On one side of the ledger (and as we have already noted), natural potencies are known for what they are if we can refer to acts or operations which exist as their proper actuation (acts and operations which have been elicited or caused and which exist as their proper correlatives). As we have already noted, a natural potency is brought to a species of fulfillment which is proper to it if we can refer to some kind of natural act or natural operation which acts from without to effect a realization which would otherwise not occur or exist.⁶⁵ Natural potencies and natural acts define each other in a manner which distinguishes an order of being that is set apart from every other order of being which we can possibly think of and which can possibly exist. With respect specifically to what we know through our acts of sensing, understanding, and judging, we refer to a specific order of being which exists as their proper correlative. We refer to the being of nature or the being of *natura* or, in other words, we refer to the being of finite nature (a world which is known by us through our finite acts of human cognition).

Hence, within this context, if natural potencies are realized by acts or operations which exist as active potencies which, as finite agent causes or as finite agent objects, are said to exist *within nature* (they exist as contingent beings or perhaps we can say that they exist as creatures) and if, on the other hand, in some cases, natural potencies are brought to some kind of fulfillment or completion by acts or operations which do not belong to nature (acts or operations which refer to some kind of infinite agent cause or some kind of infinite agent object which is lacking in contingency, not existing as a creature), then we must speak about natural potencies in terms which must speak about how they can also exist as obediential potencies. Both kinds of potency exist as specifications of passive potency. However, if we are to distinguish a natural potency from an obediential potency, for a satisfactory explanation whose point of departure is our natural or our proportionate acts of human understanding and our proportionate or natural knowledge of nature, we must move from causes which exist within nature toward external, extrinsic causes which transcend causes which exist within the order of nature and we should distinguish between the influence or the working of a natural cause and the influence or the working of a cause which functions in a supernatural way (because it does not belong to the order of nature that we directly experience, understand, and directly know through our contingent acts of human

effects, are endured as a consequence of sin and the evil which exists in sin. In relation to sin, in order to overcome the hurt which is caused by sin, grace can act on nature as a healing agent although, if we refer to nature or natural potency in a manner which is divorced from problems which are caused by the iniquity of sin, we can also say that grace acts on our contingent, created natures to raise them to a height or a degree of perfection that they would otherwise not have. With the help of grace, in either case, a person's potency is enlarged. It is changed for the better if, as human subjects, we can now do what, before, we could not do.

⁶³Aquinas, *Sententia super Physicam*, 1, 1, 3; 2, 1, 145; *Quaestio disputata De unione verbi incarnati*, 1, as cited by Thomas Gilby, *Theological Texts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 286-287, n. 507 on nature.

⁶⁴Aristotle, *Physics*, 2, 1, 192b 21-22; Aquinas, *Sententia super Physicam*, 2, 1, 5, as cited by Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 122, n. 92. See also Aquinas, *Sententia super Physicam*, 2, 2, 142; 2, 2, 145.

⁶⁵Lonergan, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum*, no. 75 and “The Natural Desire to See God,” *Collection*, pp. 81-84, p. 87, cited by Jeremy D. Wilkins, “Finality, History, and Grace: General and Special Categories in Lonergan's Theory of History,” *Wisdom and Holiness, Science and Scholarship: Essays in Honor of Matthew L. Lamb* (Naples, Florida: Sapientia Press, 2007), pp. 393-394.

cognition). A cause would come to us or it would act upon us from an order of being which is quite other than what we would have when we refer to the being of our natural world.⁶⁶

From a viewpoint that is initially determined by a viewpoint which refers to an undifferentiated understanding of potency (in this context, we can speak about mere presences of potency), we cannot distinguish between what exists for us as a natural potency and what exists for us as an obediential potency. As we should already know about the meaning of potency, potency *as potency* is lacking in any presence of determinations and, by lacking in any kind of striving which would exist as a species of determination (this striving goes with this determination), potency *as potency* (or potency as *prime potency*) is entirely lacking in the presence of any exigencies, drives, or orientations which would urge the need, the value, or the necessity of receptions that would be geared toward determinations of one specific kind or another (however slight could be the specificity of a given determination). If we should choose to speak about any exigencies that could be present within prime potency or within potency as potency, we can only speak about exigencies which cannot be identified. We would speak about exigencies which are indeterminate.⁶⁷ In potency as potency or in prime potency, an undifferentiated species of disposition can be spoken about and this disposition is oriented toward any kind of initial differentiation which would exist when we refer to possible receptions of meaning, intelligibility, or form which would exist for us as specifications of first act.

On the basis then of our understanding and in applying our understanding, we can have differentiation (we experience the beginnings of a differentiation). In prime potency, we speak initially here about a general disposition which is oriented toward possible initial receptions of form and intelligibility and we can also say that this general disposition is not to be confused with determinate dispositions of potency which exist if we think about naturally existing potencies and how every naturally existing potency exists, to some extent, as an *informed* potency (a natural potency which, to some extent, already exists in a condition of first act). In a condition of first act, it is determinately orientated in either of two ways. First, it is orientated toward a second kind of realization or a second species of act which refers to acts of being or acts of existence (the real existence of a naturally existing thing or the real existence of a naturally existing act or naturally existing operation which is the doing or the reception of a naturally existing thing who exists as a subject of proportionate, naturally existing acts). Second, it is orientated toward new first acts when we think about how an informed natural potency is determinately receptive to new specifications of form as first act (this species of potency in first act with this new species of form in a new realization of first act). A particular disposition which has already been informed by a naturally existing form is oriented toward a new naturally existing species of form. In other words, from a point of view which is determined by our human acts of cognition (our acts of sensing, understanding, and judging), in moving from potency as potency or in moving from the being of prime potency, we can say that first potency is always indeterminate with respect to possible receptions of specific forms in first act although an exigence can be said to exist within this potency (an exigence which orients this potency toward receptions which exist as first realizations of form or meaning). First potency as prime potency is orientated toward initial receptions of form in first act while everything which exists in a condition of first act exists as a second potency (in a condition of second potency). A determinate specification of potency (versus an indeterminate specification of potency), it is orientated toward possible acts of being or possible acts of existence which exist as

⁶⁶Raymond Moloney, S.J., “De Lubac and Lonergan on the Supernatural,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 517-518; Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, pp. 142-143, p. 147.

⁶⁷Lonergan, *De sanctissima Trinitate*, as cited by Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 338, n. 12.

second act.

However, as we attend to exigencies which exist within presences of potency and while we can refer to exigences which are either determinate or indeterminate (natural potencies are informed by determinate orientations and prime potency, an indeterminate orientation), within this context, we can also possibly speculatively speak about the possible existence of a third species of potency which would be entirely lacking in any presences of exigency. We refer here to a species of potency which is entirely lacking in any kind of orientation or inclination which should be endemic to it if our understanding of potency is conditioned by how we are to think about the nature and being of natural potencies. If a degree of determination or a degree of act exists with respect to natural potencies, we can then attend to potencies which are entirely lacking in any presences of determination (determinations as specifications of act point to presences of potency) and, when we do this, we speak about the presence of prime potency. However, if we attend to the presence of exigencies which exist with respect to prime potency (exigencies which exist as a kind of act or reality which we know about, not through an act of sense but through a reflective act of understanding), then we can conceive or think about a third kind of potency which would be entirely lacking in any presence of disposition or inclination (a potency which, to some extent, resembles what we have when we think about prime potency since, in the indetermination of prime potency and in the absence of exigence in a species of potency which refers to obediential potency, we refer to realities which are only known through inferences which we judge to be true in our later acts of reflective understanding. Nothing is known here through what can be given to us through an act of sense. Prime potency and obediential potency are only known as conclusions in a context which works with acts of understanding which are then judged in a manner which refers to acts of reflective understanding.⁶⁸

⁶⁸In thinking about the kinds of acts of understanding which we need to have in order to speak about the potencies which respectively belong to prime potency and obediential potency, please note that we refer here to a kind of understanding which emerges if we think about how direct acts of understanding can be combined with acts of understanding which exist as inverse acts of understanding or which, in other words, can be referred to as negative acts of understanding. Inverse acts of understanding realize that a given line of inquiry should not be pursued within a given context. In general, every line of inquiry supposes that there exists some kind of intelligibility which is to be grasped by a prospective act of understanding which would be given to us as a gift. All acts of understanding exist properly as receptions and not as the actions of a cognitive subject. However, when a given line of inquiry is concluded by an act of understanding which grasps an intelligibility which is understood, we have a direct act of understanding which is to be contrasted with the reception of another act of understanding which is commonly referred to as an inverse or a negative act of understanding. In some situations, a given act of inquiry will be concluded by an understanding which realizes that an anticipated intelligibility is not to be had or grasped by the possible reception of a direct act of understanding. Inverse acts of understanding encourage understanders to engage in other, different lines of inquiry which could lead to understandings which would exist for them as direct acts of understanding. In order to understand the kind of potency which exists when we think about the being of prime potency, from acts of direct understanding which exist in specifications of form or which exist as specifications of form, we can think about what we have when we have something which exists in our experience but which could be lacking in any presence of intelligibility. That which is without intelligibility is what we refer to when we speak about prime matter. But, if we understand that a real distinction exists between what is possibly orientated toward determinative receptions of form and what could be lacking in any kind of orientation which is receptive to determinative

To explain more fully how we can think about a possible absence of exigencies and what the consequences could possibly be for further understanding why natural potencies are not to be confused with obediential potencies (a real distinction exists between them), it is to be noted that exigencies (to the degree that they exist) suggest needs or demands which imply that, if you have “x,” you should or must have “y.” If “x” has an exigence for “y,” you say that “y” must exist as a completion to “x.” In this context, as you move from “x,” you say that “y” cannot be understood apart from “x” and the exigences of “x.” If you begin with “x” and if you say that the striving of “x” must be met or fulfilled by what is given by “y,” you refer to a necessity of “y” which is determined by how “x” exists (by the striving that is constitutive of “x” in terms of the being or the nature of “x”).

If, for instance, human beings exist as contingent beings who are not able to account for the being of their own existence, we must refer to some other kind of being (a non-contingent being) if we are to move toward an entirely satisfactory explanation. What exists contingently is explained by what necessarily exists. However, if, on the other hand, we say that “x” exists as a species of first principle and if every other kind of being exists as a function of “x,” then, in this context, we will conclude by saying that non-contingent being exists for the sake of contingent beings. In other words, “y” exists for the sake of “x.” Contingent being determines non-contingent being or, in other words, higher orders of being exist for the sake of lower orders of being and potencies which do not belong to the order of nature exist for the sake of potencies that exist within nature (being strictly natural). A point of view is drawn which conflicts with another point of view which speaks about a converse order of relations. Higher orders of being transcend lower orders of being to the degree that lower orders of being exist for the sake of higher orders of being. Higher orders of being do not negate the reality or the intelligibility which belongs to lower orders of being and, at the same time, we can also say that lower orders of being exist as functions of higher orders of being. If we want to speak about potencies, potencies with respect to a higher order of being do not exist as potencies that are orientated to lower orders of being. A potency which does not belong to nature (a higher order of being) cannot exist as a function of potencies which belong to a lower order of being. From something which is less, we cannot obtain something which is more. As, on the affirmative side, we can speak about a correlation which exists between potencies which are natural and potencies which are not lacking in presences of exigency, on the affirmative side, we can also speak about a correlation which exists between potencies which are obediential and potencies which are entirely lacking in any presences of exigency which could possibly exist within them. In the language which Lonergan uses, “God does not exist on account of the order of the universe.”⁶⁹ We can know about God if we attend to the order of the universe. But, on the other hand, the order of the universe is not something which is prior to God. The order of the universe is something which comes from God and so, if we begin with God as an unrestricted act of being, we can

receptions of form, we can possibly speak about how one species of receptivity differs from another and then, on the basis of this difference, we speak about how prime potency exists in a way that differs from potencies which exist as obediential potencies. In the understanding which we have, we move in the context of acts of understanding which oscillate with each other. Inverse acts of understanding encourage new direct acts of understanding and then, on the basis of new direct acts of understanding, we can ask questions which can lead to the experience which we have when we have new inverse acts of understanding. From any kind of act of understanding which exists for us as a species of act, we can move toward a new species of potency that we can identify (a new species of potency which we can possibly speak about and define).

⁶⁹Lonergan, *De sanctissima Trinitate*, as cited by Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 338, n. 12.

refer to a species of unrestricted potency which is not to be identified with potency as potency nor with potency as prime potency. From an analysis of potency that begins with God, we first encounter a potency that is entirely passive in a manner which differs from the passive potency of prime potency. We refer to a potency that is known if we refer to God as an unrestricted act of knowing and being. From a point of view which begins with nature, we have a notion of potency in terms of prime potency and this potency is not devoid of exigencies which are proper to it (we refer to indeterminate exigencies). But, from a point of view which begins from what is not a part of nature, we have a notion of potency which is more unrestricted, we have a potency which exists more passively.

Admittedly, if we move from an order which exists within nature (an order which joins natural potencies, natural forms, and natural acts with each other), we should eventually move from acts which exist within nature to acts which exist within an order of being which is quite other than nature (an order of being which transcends the order of nature). In determining the kind of potency which can be possibly correlated with acts which transcend the being of natural acts, in this context, we can speak about potencies which exist as obediential potencies. Through an analogical act of understanding which knows about an ordering which moves from natural potencies to natural forms and then from there to natural acts, we can try to argue that a like relation exists if we think about the meaning of a supernatural act.

When we attend to the relative absence of determination which exists with respect both to the being of natural potencies and the being of obediential potencies, we can understand why both potencies are remotely ordered to receptions which could possibly come to them if, in a potency (in something which could be this or in something which could be that), there could exist a meaning or an intelligibility which would exist as a first species of determination, converting a potency into something which is lacking in potency (relatively speaking).⁷⁰ In the context of our understanding, we admit that natural potencies and obediential potencies exist with a degree of determination since, within our understanding or through our understanding, we distinguish between natural potencies and obediential potencies. However, when we refer to additional presences of meaning or additional presences of intelligibility, we refer to an initial order of actualization which exists for us as first act. For both potencies (natural potencies and obediential potencies), we must first speak about possible presences of intelligibility before we can speak about another order of realization which refers to acts of being or acts of existence or, on the other hand, actions or operations which would belong to the activity or the life of existing subjects. Through intelligibility we move toward truth as through form we move toward act. In the ordering of both natural potencies and obediential potencies toward receptions which exist as first acts, we appropriately speak about these potencies as essential passive potencies. An ordering to first acts exists before there can be any kind of ordering which refers to presences of second act.

These things being said however, in a given context, when or as we distinguish between a natural potency and an obediential potency, we must admit that natural potencies exist as obediential potencies if we can say that a given natural potency can be fulfilled or brought into a species of completion or transitioned into a higher order of being in a manner which does not suppose that natural potencies are negated in their being by any presences of obediential potency and any possible realizations which refer to realizations of obediential potency. In the kind of vertical finality which exists when we think about presences of natural potency – the intelligibility of a natural potency with respect to the kind of

⁷⁰Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 148.

openness which properly belongs to it and which we have when we think about presences of natural potency – the directedness or the orientation of a given natural potency is not something which is necessarily closed to realizations of being which can come to it from points of origin that exist beyond the order of being which we intend and know when we speak about the being of our natural world and whatever exists within the being of our contingent naturally existing world. What exists at a lower level of being supplies materials for what can come to exist at a higher level of being, and this is true whether we speak about fulfillments of potency which refer to causes or acts of being which exist within nature or whether we speak about causes or acts of being which do not exist within nature, existing beyond nature.⁷¹ In either case, some kind of good is being achieved (a good which is informed by presences of intelligibility) although, if we move from presences of natural good toward presences of supernatural good, we would be moving from what possesses less meaning or less intelligibility to what possesses a greater measure of meaning and intelligibility. Hence, whatever could possibly exist for us as an absolutely supernatural good would exist for us with a measure of meaning or an intelligibility that is absolutely supernatural. Nothing else would possess greater meaning. Nothing else could be more intelligible or nothing else could be more intelligent.

Potency in Description and Potency in Explanation

Because human knowing never exists as a simple single act (because it is constituted by different transitions which occur within it), for this reason, prime matter or primary matter as an ideal specification for the meaning of potency has been legitimately subjected to a differentiation that accords with a number of different transitions which occur within the order of our human cognition. This differentiation identifies a number of subsidiary explanatory principles which, in some way or other, all refer to potency, albeit, different degrees or different kinds of potency. As noted above, if a first kind of potency initially refers to what is simply given to us in an act of sense prior to the reception of any act of understanding, a second kind of potency emerges if we think about what is given to us in an initial direct act of understanding apart from what can be given in a later reflective act of understanding. The traditional association of potency with experiencing (as this is given through our acts of sense) changes as potency retains an association or a correlation with experiencing although now a new form of experiencing refers to a presence of intellectual consciousness or a self-experiencing which exists in the thinking that we can have about our ideas or as we encounter different meanings or values of one kind or another which come our way from others (possibly through cultural assimilations of one kind or another). In other words, if we think about the difference which exists between descriptive forms of human knowing (present in our acts of sense) and explanatory forms of human knowing (present in our acts of understanding), potency can be understood in terms of two different meanings that normatively belong to it. An empirical or material notion of potency is to be contrasted with a formal or an explanatory notion of potency.

It is to be admitted, however, that it is not easy for us to speak about these matters since potency is only known by us for what it is as a metaphysical principle if its meaning is grasped by us in an act of direct understanding that is grounded in the acts of self-understanding which we may have. An explanatory act of understanding notes here that, on the one hand, potency refers to a principle of reception which exists in things and that, on the other hand, what is not in potency (or what is not potency) refers to something that is acting or causing something else in another in a transition that moves that other from a condition of potency to a condition of act, to a condition of what is not in potency (even as we admit

⁷¹Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 142.

that different kinds of realization can be distinguished: different kinds of act, different kinds of actuation). In speaking thus about the existence of different kinds of realization, we must attend to metaphysical principles which are quite other than potency. We think about transitions as these move, in general, from a condition of potency to a condition of act. Different kinds of potencies can be distinguished from each other on the basis of the different kinds of acts which can be received by different potencies.

To speak a bit more concretely about these matters, in the beginning of things, persons give names or labels for the different things which they encounter as bodily unities within the field of their sensing experience. They know that one thing or one body is not another thing or body (a dog is not a cat) even if they can only name or point to differences and determinations which they have yet to understand (and even if they may not initially know that, to some extent, they are in need of some growth or increase in their personal experience of understanding). Why is this a cat and not a dog? This is a question that is not answered by simply naming that this is that and not this or by noting that certain differences can be obviously noticed through our acts of sense. In any case, from and within a knowing that initially only knows names and labels in a descriptive context and which can then describe traits that can be sensed, within the order of description a more differentiated notion of potency gradually begins to emerge when, for instance, the potency of an individual unit or a body is distinguished from the potency of a component, an accident, or a property which a given individual body can have now at one time and now at another. Hence, before we can begin to enter into a discussion which wants to talk about explanatory kinds of potency, we can find differentiations with respect to potency if we begin initially with only a descriptive notion of potency. From one kind of determination which thus says that this individual unit, body, or thing is not this other individual unit, body, or thing and from a second kind of determination which goes on to say that this individual unit, body, or thing undergoes change without ceasing to be the distinct individual unity, body, or thing which it has always been, we can get into a differentiation which speaks about a first kind of potency which refers to a central potency and a second kind of potency which refers to a conjugate potency (borrowing language that is taken from the conceptuality that we can find in how Lonergan speaks about these two different kinds of potency).⁷² Each of these two kinds of potencies is in turn then subject to a possible differentiation

⁷²Stewart, p. 165. Where Aristotle and Aquinas speak about what is substantial and accidental, in his *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* and in many later texts, Lonergan respectively speaks about what is central and what is conjugate. Lonergan's technical conceptuality obviously differs from that of Aristotle and Aquinas (even if, at times, he often uses the traditional language of Aristotle and Aquinas) although, if we understand the conceptuality of Aristotle and Aquinas in a way which reduces their modes of expression to the existence of prior acts of understanding, we should be able to understand why Lonergan's conceptuality exists as a more specific articulation of distinctions and differences than what we commonly find in the language that was employed in the texts of Aristotle and Aquinas.

As Lonergan speaks about how different kinds of potency can be distinguished from each other: "...if there are different kinds of forms, there must be different kinds of potency...". Cf. *Insight*, p. 460. Central potency (substantial potency) refers to individuality as this is experienced within sense data and conjugate potency refers to an awareness of "spatiotemporal continua, conjunctions, and successions" which exist within the data of our sense data. Cf. *Insight*, p. 462. While, each in their own way, central potency and conjugate potency refer to how data can be experienced by us (in two different ways), if we want to understand why we should experience data in two different ways (or why we

of meaning which can go on to speak about two different kinds of central potency and two different kinds of conjugate potency. Descriptive central potencies need to be distinguished from explanatory central potencies as descriptive conjugate potencies also need to be distinguished from explanatory conjugate potencies.⁷³ In differentiating the meaning of potency, a descriptive notion of potency and an explanatory notion of potency is applied to how we should speak about the potency of an individual thing or unit in contrast to how we should speak about the potency of a property that a given individual thing or unit can have or not have and yet remain what it happens to be as an individual unit or thing. Within this scheme, four different kinds of potency can be adverted to and distinguished from each other: a descriptive notion of central potency versus an explanatory notion of central potency; and a descriptive notion of conjugate potency versus an explanatory notion of conjugate potency.

Central Potency: Body or Thing?

Firstly, with respect to the potency which Lonergan refers to as central potency, in order to understand what Lonergan means when he speaks about central potency, in order to speak about this kind of potency in a way that can distinguish between an empirical commonsense notion of it and an explanatory technical notion of it (we refer to two distinct realms of meaning), the potency of a *thing* as

should want to experience data in two different ways), for purposes of further understanding, we can always attend to the differences which exist in the questions that we can ask about data which is given to us within our experience. If we ask questions which look for links or for similarities which can exist within the data of our experience, we can ask “why questions” or we can ask “how questions.” We look for relations which, perhaps, we can determine (“this seems to go with this” or “this seems to be conjoined with that”) and perhaps, at a later time, we can possibly verify the truth of a possible relation through an act of understanding which refers to an act of judgment (an act of reflective understanding). And so, when we look for relations that attend to the possible existence of any similarities which link a given datum with this other experience of datum, we will be working with a notion of potency which is to be identified with what we mean when we speak about conjugate potencies (the possible existence of conjugate potencies). However, when we attend to data with questions which ask about “what this is” or “what that is” versus “what this other is,” we attend to data not in terms of how this datum resembles this other datum but in terms of how this datum exists apart from this other datum which is given to us within the content of our experience. In other words, employing Lonergan's own words, we work with central potencies (substantial potencies) when we attend to data as an experience of “instances.” Data “as instances” (central, substantial potency) is to be distinguished from data “as similar” (conjugate, accidental potency). Cf. Lonergan, “Intelligence and Reality,” unpublished lecture, 1950, p. 23, cited by Frederick E. Crowe, *Developing the Lonergan Legacy: Historical, Theoretical, and Existential Themes*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 48.

⁷³See *Understanding and Being*, p. 104, where Lonergan distinguishes between two notions of “unity-identity-whole.” One is differentiated in terms of acts of sense which belong to a sensing human subject; the other is differentiated in terms which refer to the relations which exist between other “unity-identity-wholes.” When we shift into a point of view which regards “things” as they exist among themselves, relating to each other and existing as they relate to each other, we get “the elements and compounds of chemistry” and in biology, we get theories which get into phylogenetics and ontogenetics. In his way of speaking, when Lonergan speaks about central potency and conjugate potency, he speaks about these potencies in a way that distinguishes between an empirical meaning for these potencies and an explanatory meaning which these terms can also have and which they should have when we work from within the context of a fully adequate, explanatory metaphysics.

a naturally existing individual unit or unity of being needs is to be very clearly distinguished from the potency of a *body* as a naturally existing individual unit or unity of being (where a thing as a body refers to a thing as it relates to my senses and as it is known by my senses).⁷⁴ The unity of a body exists as an experienced material or bodily unity. Its unity is sensed and it is immediately known through our acts of sense and through any descriptive conjugates which exist as terms of acts of sense. For instance, the body of a mouse exists as a specific kind of datum which can be sensed (it exists as a specific kind of body; it has a bodily unity that is peculiar to itself) and the bodily unity of a mouse is to be clearly distinguished from the body of a fox (which can also be sensed and experienced to have a specific bodily unity). A fox can capture and eat a mouse and so the body of a mouse disappears. It becomes part of a fox's body. A mouse ceases to exist in its being and individuality but its bodyliness

⁷⁴William A. Stewart, *Introduction to Lonergan's Insight: An Invitation to Philosophize* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), p. 11. A thing as a thing in relation to my senses properly refers to a body. A thing which is understood apart from its bodyliness or which is grasped as the term of an act of direct understanding refers to something that is not directly sensed by any act of sense although a thing which exists as a species of spiritual or intellectual reality or unity is something which can begin to reveal itself to us through a possible bodyliness which it can have, a bodyliness which we can directly know about through our acts of sense whose terms refer to empirical or material conjugates. In the kind of language (the conceptuality) which we find in Joseph Flanagan's *Quest for Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Lonergan's Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 112, it is said that a thing which is directly related to our acts of sense differs from a thing as it is known in terms of how it is related to other things (apart from how it could be related to our acts of human sensing). In the order and development of our human cognition, something other first exists for us as a body before it can then exist for us as a thing. A transition occurs as we move from "things as bodies" to "things as things." In an example of difference which exists between body and thing as this is given by Stewart, p. 167, a dog as a body is to be distinguished from a dog as a thing. As a body, a dog is sensed as a spatial totality. This concrete totality is immediately perceived and known in a single act of sense. But, as a thing, when a dog is understood as a thing, the materiality of a body is combined with properties which not only distinguish a dog from some other kind of being but which also point to the intelligibility of a dog's nature (what makes a dog a dog). Reasons which exist as terms of acts of understanding explain why dogs exist in the way that they do and why they typically behave in the ways that they do.

Please note that artificially existing objects (which exist as artifacts) are to be distinguished from naturally existing objects (whether we speak about naturally existing bodies or naturally existing things). Naturally existing bodies and naturally existing things exist without benefit of any form of human intervention which acts as an efficient or instrumental cause to bring something other into being which before had not existed. If, in metaphysics, we want to understand the constitutive principles of being which refer to the being of the world or the being of the universe as it exists (apart from the existence of a human world which is brought into being as a consequence of our human actions), we do not try to speak about potency, form, and act as these apply to anything which exists within our manmade human world. If we want to try and speak about our humanly constructed world in a way that employs metaphysical principles, we apply metaphysical principles in a manner which engages in analogical forms of understanding: borrowing and adapting the meaning of metaphysical principles in a manner which seems to be most appropriate in a given case. A car, for instance, is not to be regarded as a thing or a substance although, in an analogical way of speaking, we can refer to it as a "technological thing" or a "technical being." Cf. David Fleischacker, as quoted by Ronald Shady in conversation,

or materiality remains as a substratum which has been incorporated into the materiality of another animal.

The *potency* of a thing *as a body* is thus distinguished or set apart in a way which refers to the *matter* or the materiality of a body (the material causality of a body if we wish to use this traditional type of language which derives from Aristotle). This potency which is in play refers to a material kind of potency (a potency which is specifically denoted whenever we speak about the potency of matter). According to a law or a principle with a conceptuality which speaks about the “conservation of matter” amidst change,⁷⁵ the matter remains or endures despite what changes occur and even if these changes are not understood by us. If, at one time for instance, marble was taken and carved into statues which were then erected in the ancient Roman Forum, at a later time in history, these same statues were taken down and broken into pieces so that their material ingredients could be used to make lime. Matter undergoes change and transformation as, sequentially, it becomes a part of other bodies (other bodily unities) although the matter which undergoes this kind of transformation remains what it is as matter.

June 27, 2012). Its intelligible unity (*unum per se*) is explained by an intelligently related structure of parts where the relation constructs the unity of a whole. However, this unity is imposed from without through the presence of an artificial form (a *forma artificialis*). Cf. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, p. 72; p. 334. In contrast, the intelligible unity of a thing or substance is explained by the presence of a natural form which can only be viewed as a species of artificial form if we should choose to refer to causal forms as these exist within the mind of God. If divine causality is not to be adverted to in any way, natural forms are to be regarded as intelligible unities which simply already exist within a world which is simply given to us. We experience this world and we can ask questions about it and perhaps we can conclude that this world has been brought into being by an agent who is other than ourselves.

If we should want to distinguish more carefully or more exactly between the presence of an artificial form and the presence of a natural form which properly applies to the being of a substance or the being of a thing, we can note that, when a manmade “thing” loses its form, if a house, for instance, ceases to exist as a building, its parts remain in the reality which these parts have always had. The stone, the wood remain what they are as stone or wood. No substantial change can be adverted to with respect to the being of any parts. However, with respect to the natural being of already existing substances (already existing things), we find that, without the presence of an abiding natural form (functioning as a substantial form or central form), the parts of a thing cannot retain the reality which they have and which they can only have through the presence of a natural, substantial, central form. Absent a given substantial natural form and every part ceases to exist for what it is as a being or reality. If a living thing undergoes death (if it ceases to exist), its parts cease to exist for what they are as parts (for what they have been as parts). Cf. Aquinas, *On Generation and Corruption*, bk 1, lect. 15, para. 108. The eye of a living being which exists as a part cannot be identified with the eye of a corpse. It no longer performs the same functions. It ceases to have the same reality. Flesh and bones belonging to a corpse cannot be equated with the reality of flesh and bones which belong to a living thing. Hence, with Aquinas, we can say that the substantial natural form of beings or substances exists in a manner which is prior to the being of any constituent parts. The form is prior to any parts since, through the presence of an abiding form, every part comes to exist with a nature which is now proper to it. Cf. <http://thomasaquinas.edu/sites/default/files/goyettel.pdf>, June 27, 2012.

⁷⁵Adler, *Aristotle for Everybody*, p. 37.

In the burning of wood, the matter which exists in wood is turned into the matter that exists in ashes.⁷⁶ For this reason, because of this openness or potentiality, material potency can be understood to refer to a particular specification of central potency: a potency which refers to the capacity, or the ability, or the changeability of a given individual material body to become some other kind of individual material body.⁷⁷ A specific kind of body becomes another kind of body. It *can become* another kind of body.

In the same line of thought, since one body differs from another body as, for instance, one mouse of the same species differs from another mouse of the same species, besides functioning as a principle of receptivity, matter also functions as a principle of individuation.⁷⁸ The matter of this body is not the matter of this other body. A specific kind of body is distributed among many individual instances of it. Differences which distinguish individuals from each other are all explained by differences grounded in spatial and temporal co-ordinates which are known by us through our acts of sense (although sense cannot explain why individuality exists or why experiences of individuality belong to sense perception in a way which cannot belong to anything else since the desired explanation is not itself a datum of sense).⁷⁹ The desired explanation would have to be an intellectualized specification of datum (or the term of an act of understanding) as this exists in the experience which we have of our intellectual consciousness and from the self-understanding that exists in knowing about the different kind of knowing which exists in our acts of sensing versus the kind of knowing that exists in our other acts of cognition which differ from our prior acts of sensing.

With respect however to the potency of a *thing* which exists as a distinct individual unit or unity which is to be distinguished from the potency of a *body*, the point of departure for understanding what kind of central potency exists when we speak about the potency of an individual thing is the fact that a thing in its unity exists or is known through an act of understanding (specifically: an act of direct understanding). It exists as a datum of our intellectual consciousness or, in other words, if we want to speak about a thing and the unity which is proper to a thing by employing a metaphysical designation, we say that a thing exists in its unity as an intelligibility (as an intelligible reality or, in other words and somewhat more precisely, as “an intelligible unity” that is grasped not within one given set of data that is immediately present to us within one given act of sense but within and among diverse sets of data that are experienced by us at different times through differing acts of sensing, an act of sensing here and another act of sensing there).⁸⁰ We move to a thing initially from experiences that begin with bodies (just as we move from acts and data of sensing toward acts and data of understanding). If a unity within data exists as a unity within space, we have a body. We consciously experience a body and the spatial unity which properly belongs to the coordinates of a given body. But if, by questioning and receiving a later act of understanding, we experience a unity which exists within time *but not within space*, the unity which we experience in our understanding refers to a thing in its intelligible individual unity and not to a body.⁸¹ The material unity of a body differs from the intelligible unity of a

76Stewart, p. 165.

77Stewart, p. 165.

78Stewart, p. 164.

79Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 5.

80Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, p. 104; Stewart, p. 167. Notice how Lonergan speaks about thing in *Insight*, p. 271: “the notion of a thing is grounded in an insight that grasps, not relations between data, but a unity, identity, whole in data.” No notion of thing can be grasped within a context that refers to a single datum of sense.

81Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, 1987 Morelli edition, p. 126. Please note that, as an

thing. The unity of a thing endures (the unity of a thing is known as it exists through time or across time) despite what changes occur as we move from one time frame to another (or as we move from one experience of presence to another sensible experience of presence).⁸²

To understand a bit better how or why we should speak about technical differences which distinguish the meaning of a body from the meaning of a thing (in other words, if we are to understand how we can conceive of externally experienced objects in a way which refers to how external objects relate to each other in contrast with a conceptuality which thinks about how external objects relate to ourselves as sensing thinking knowing beings), an understanding of the role of measurement within science should indicate how it has been possible for us to move from a notion and an experience of body toward a

activity, questioning transcends whatever is given to us in our acts of sense. We go beyond what is simply given to us in our acts of sense. And, in our questioning, we can ask questions about what and why in a manner which gradually distinguishes between what exists as a part and what exists as a whole or unit. For instance, we might want to understand what happens when something is burned. What kind of change occurs when, through fire, a given thing is converted into ashes? In the science of chemistry, we want to learn about the nature of chemical transformations. How do we account for a type of motion or movement which exists here not as a species of locomotion? However, in attempting to ask these kinds of questions, we begin to discover a division within data when we find that some specifications of data exist to the degree that they exist in something else which is other while other specifications of data refer to wholes or units which exist in an autonomous fashion. In a very simple example, in his *Quest for Self-Knowledge*, p. 112, Flanagan distinguishes between a leaf or the branch of a tree and a tree (a plant). No leaf or branch can exist independently of any tree which exists as a plant. In discovering how our inquiry begins to distinguish between what exists as a whole within data and what exists as a part which inheres or belongs to a whole within data, from questions that ask about a unity which exists within data, we begin to enter into a shift which takes us from an initial experience of bodies to apprehensions which speak about things. Through the mediation of what we know when we speak about a thing, we can refer to what exists when we think about bodies and the experience which is given to us about the being of bodies.

⁸²In *Insight*, p. 461, Lonergan argues that we need to distinguish between what is meant by a body and what is meant by a thing if change is to be regarded as a reality which transcends whatever is given to us as the term of one or more acts of sense. Change cannot be understood if it is reduced to what happens when there is “the substitution of one datum for another” nor can it be understood if it is reduced to what happens when there exists “the replacement of one concept by another.” These substitutions or successions, without doubt, all occur. In the consciousness which exists in our sensing, we experience ongoing differences in data (constantly shifting variations in data that are given to us on a “moment to moment basis”). Our acts of sense are intrinsically conditioned by circumstances of time and place (or, by what Lonergan refers to as the existence of an “empirical residue”) and if we strictly hold to what our senses tell us, we experience sequences of stages within a succession where no one stage is necessarily related to another. Cf. W. Norris Clarke, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 141. In this type of scenario, a first being is completely annihilated and a second being is brought into existence out of nothing that has anything to do with a first being that had been known.

However, if we want to talk about change (if a real distinction distinguishes change from an ongoing stream of substitutions and successions that is given to us in our sensing consciousness), then we need to be able to say that, within a stream of substitutions and successions, some kind of unity

notion and a species of experience which refers to the meaning of a thing.

Measurement

In speaking thus about something which is other in terms of its location or place or which is other in terms of quantities which differ from quantitative measures which refer to ourselves, we employ units of measure which can begin to speak about external objects in ways that distinguish the reality of their being from the reality or the sense of our own being. We refer, for instance, to measurements of length, area, volume, weight, time, and temperature (among other possible measurements which can be also considered). Our height, relative to this other object, is not the height of this other, external object.

exists among the differences which exist within sense data (a unity that is able to join all the differences into a oneness that is grasped in our understanding and which can only be understood in an act of understanding since this oneness, as a oneness, is not given or presented in any act of sense nor in any given datum of sense). The oneness exists within our understanding (an understanding which is elicited and provoked as a consequence of questions which ask about what exists as a whole rather than what exists only as a part). Cf. Flanagan, *Quest for Self-Knowledge*, p. 112. According to the teaching that has come down to us from Aquinas and according to the degree of self-understanding that we may each have of our own acts of understanding, an act of understanding reduces an experience of material multiplicity into a oneness which refers to an intelligibility which exists as an intelligibly grasped unity. The unity exists as a center of activity (as a principle of organization: as “a center of acting and being acted upon”). Cf. Clarke, p. 129. This act or activity belongs to this unity but not this other act or activity which probably belongs to another intelligible unity which we have yet to know about and to identify as a center of activity. This act or activity properly belongs to this unity but not this other act or activity.

Hence, as we think about this oneness and if we want to think about how it interacts with all the differences that we may be sensing, we can think about it as a being or a reality or a thing which participates or shares in all these differences. The differences all belong to it. Or, more accurately, we can perhaps say about these differences that they all participate in this one being, reality, or thing (although, as suggested, in different ways and in different degrees). But, if these same differences all participate in a unity which transcends each difference and which joins each difference to other differences, then we must speak about a reality (a thing) which transcends differences of space and time. Its identity endures or it remains as it has been through circumstances of time and place and it does not vary amid conditions that are determined by the presence of spatial and temporal coordinates. Whenever a being (a thing) exists as a subject, as a subject, it changes every time it does something (each act, as an act, always differs from another act that is done). A subject as a receiver also differs when it receives acts that differ from each other (an act here and an act there in a succession of differing receptions). But, on the other hand, when a being is considered apart from its subjectivity, when it is considered as a being, a reality, or a thing which exists as an identity whether or not it is doing any particular act or whether it is receiving any particular act (when, as a being, it experiences or does different acts, shifting from one set of acts to another set of acts), then we must speak about it in a way which refers to the presence of an abiding form of self-identity (a self-identity that never changes and which always holds). Cf. Clarke, pp. 127-129. In one sense, a being as a thing changes (it is always changing) and, in another sense, it does not change (it never changes) even as we realize and know (in agreement with Aquinas) that a given being (a given thing) exists not in order simply to exist but, principally, in order to exercise or to live out its individual existence. Mere existence is not to be

The same can be said about our weight. However, if we look at our measurements (at the kinds of measurements which we have initially used within the history of our understanding), we find a lack of agreement or a degree of ambiguity about what exactly is to be regarded as a correct, exact measure. In Roman times for instance, a mile or *mille* was said to consist of 1000 paces and a pace was constituted by the length of a soldier's double step. However, the length of a double step always varies as we compare the double step of one soldier with the double step of another soldier. A foot similarly refers to the length of a man's foot (the distance that runs from the heel to the end of the big toe) although again, as with Roman determinations of measure for a mile, the length of a foot varies as we move from the foot of one person to the foot of another person. In the history of early measurements, standards of measure were employed which varied from one set of concrete conditions to another set of concrete conditions. In the taking of any measurements, a degree of relativity could not be excluded. It was not known then perhaps how degrees of relativity could be excluded. A desire for determining exact standards of measure had perhaps not yet reached a point of intensity which necessitated decisions about what should be regarded as a standard measure which was to be used in any subsequent measurements that others might wish to take within their own set of concrete, contingent circumstances.

Fixed standard units of measure only gradually emerged as attempts were made to fix quantities which were less subject to influences which can come from the unforeseen presence of causes that were to be regarded as extraneous. The object was a measure of some kind that would always hold (a standard which would always be normative). In the development of English measure, the distance of a yard was determined by King Henry I (d. 1135) who decreed that this distance ran from the tip of his nose to the tip of his outstretched thumb. The measure of a foot became a third of this yard. Each yard consists of three feet. Similarly, where the measure of an acre had been performatively determined by an area of

equated with any fullness of being or the fullness of existence. In Aquinas's words: "every substance [every being] exists for the sake of its operations [its activities]." Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 105, a. 5. Similarly, in the words of Aquinas: "each and every thing shows forth that it exists for the sake of its operations; indeed, operation is the ultimate perfection of each thing." Cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 113, as cited by Clarke, p. 129.

For any elements of verification that can be found if we refer to the data of our consciousness, in the consciousness that we have of ourselves as human beings, in the consciousness that we have of our self-presence (our self-identity), we realize that we never cease to be the same being or the same person that we happen to be in the course of our personal histories (even as we also realize that, as persons, as human beings, we are constantly changing in how we are living and acting). Our personalities can go through some very radical changes or they can avoid experiencing some very radical changes: changes which refer to how we may view and judge ourselves and concomitant changes in how we may view and judge how we should relate to the world that surrounds us. Hence, when one kind of change occurs and the self-identity of a given being is not effected in any way, we can speak about accidental changes or non-substantial changes (or, in Lonergan's terminology, we speak about changes of explanatory conjugate: the reception of a different conjugate form and the reception of a corresponding conjugate act). And then, if we attempt to think about a kind of change that ends the being of a given thing, then we should think about the application of an essential or a substantial change (or, in Lonergan's terminology, we can think about changes of central form: a material substratum receives a new central form and an act of being which corresponds with a given central act).

land which a yoke of oxen could plough in one day, in the context of his own time and day King Edward I (d. 1307) decreed that an acre was to be defined by a measure which consists of 40 rods times 4 rods. Each rod consists of 5.5 yards. In the later history of measurement, standards were determined which were less subject to the influence of unwanted external changes (the impact of chance variations). With respect to the metric system for example, in 1889, in France, a new prototype metal bar was created to serve as a universally valid standard for the length of a meter. A meter's length was measured between two lines at a time and temperature which referred to the melting point of ice. However, to avoid any problems which could be caused by any possible changes in temperature (because changes in temperature always affect the size or measure of any length), a new definition or new measure was adopted in 1960 (a standardization which would not be influenced by changes in temperature). A meter equals 1,650,763.73 times the wavelength of an orange-red light that is emitted when a gas consisting of a pure isotope of krypton (mass number 86) is excited by an electrical discharge.⁸³ However, in 1983, a new definition was determined. A meter is to be equated with the length of path that is travelled by light in a vacuum during a time interval which lasts for 1/299,792,458th of a second.⁸⁴

In thinking then about how it is possible to move from bodies to things, when, in the context of our scientific inquiries, objectifying standards of measure are applied to our human experience of bodies (which we encounter through the extroverted orientation of our human consciousness which commonly exists in all our human acts of sense), new specifications or new determinations are constructed as new ways which we can use to speak about objects which are other than ourselves. Through new determinations of data which transcend the initial determinations of data which exist within our human acts and data of sense, these new specifications exist in a manner which differs from the kind of immediate givenness which we find in the concrete presence of subjective conditions as these always exist within our individual human acts of sense. A distancing occurs through taking measurements and by tabulating findings which have been determined through the different kinds of measure which we can possibly employ in a given context although, on the other hand, this distancing is not to be regarded as a work of complete separation (a severance which sunders initial acts and data of sense from any later acts and data of sense which are involved in taking and registering any measurements) although, on the other hand or at the same time, it is to be noted that the construction and tabulation of data which occurs as a consequence of refined, exact measurement is not to be equated with what is simply given to us whenever we attend to what exists for us in our initial acts and data of sense.

To understand why we can then speak about a degree of abstraction which exists as we move from one set of acts and data of sense to another set of acts and data of sense which exists as a consequence of measurement, it is to be admitted that effecting this kind of movement requires a degree and application of intelligence (a degree of intelligence which points to a presence of understanding). In moving toward acts and data of sense which are joined to numerical constructions of data, we move from initial acts and data of sense which we can have by ourselves in a manner that exists apart from any questions and interests which we might have or pose (questions and interests which would move us from simple experiences of sense toward newer experiences of sense which can reveal a presence of new suggestive patterns that, as given, can possibly encourage the reception of new, later, direct acts of understanding). Numeric determinations of data indicate how a given datum is to be correlated with the presence of one or more instances of other data. Additional correlations point to other relations

⁸³*New York Public Library Science Desk Reference*, 1995 ed., "Scientific Measurements," p. 6.

⁸⁴<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metre>, June 20, 2012.

which can exist with respect to other instances of data. Numeric determinations which exist as *one species of data* directly refer to a *second species of data* which refers to external objects that are initially known by us through our first acts and data of sense. The methodology which is used as a consequence of measurement creates a new context for understanding since the relevant images which are generated from tabulations of measure differ from any images which simply exist when we refer to our initial acts and data of sense. Through standard measurements, we now have images which exist apart from our initial acts of sense (images which point to material alignments or material conjunctions which exist among differing external objects, the material patterning of these relations suggesting the possible presence of an intelligibility which adverts to a hidden inner intelligible formal relation which can only be grasped by us through an act of direct understanding (the reception of an act of direct understanding). In this new context, we now no longer attend to how external objects relate to ourselves but to how external objects relate or stand to each other.⁸⁵ Instead of a thing which exists as a body (a thing which is experienced as if it were a body), we begin to speak about a body in terms of how it exists as a thing (a thing in terms of how it is related to other things). A thing as a thing is known in a manner which is able to combine many different acts of sense into a whole or an entirety: acts of sense which have existed in the past belonging to acts of sense which now exist in the present and these acts of sense then also belonging to acts of sense which have yet to be experienced by us (because their existence lies in the future). From a body that is known and defined in terms of temporal spatial conjugates, a thing emerges which is known and defined in terms which transcend the immediate presence or the immediate givenness of any temporal spatial conjugates. A thing exists in a manner which transcends what is given to us in any given single act of sense.

In an example which perhaps can be cited as an illustrative instance, water is encountered by us as a liquid in our initial acts and data of sense. And, it is true that water exists as a liquid. However, if we move from water which is experienced by us as a body to water which is conceived by us to exist as a thing, we find that, through measurements in the context of scientific inquiry, we can discover that water exists as a compound of two kinds of gases. Water exists as a thing when it exists as H₂O.⁸⁶ Water is H₂O and it will always exist as H₂O despite going through successive changes in the concrete order of things when water becomes ice or when water becomes a vapor or mist, the ice later returning to water and the vapor or mist also later returning to water.⁸⁷ A thing which exists as a thing and not as a body comes to exist as an intelligible unity which is discovered through an explanatory act of understanding which has arisen in the wake of images as these point to alignments or conjunctions which exist within data. Acts of understanding accomplish what acts of sense are not able to do. They can take a large number of different variables and refer them to something which exists as a distinct unity. Many different variables participate in a unity which exists as a distinct being (a distinct thing).

Bodies within Things

As acts of understanding exist in a manner which transcend acts of sense, what is known as a thing transcends what is known as a body. From a body that is known through a unity that is sensed and which can also be known through one or more sensible accidents or sensible properties that refer or inhere in the presence of a given material unity, as we begin to discover a unity which can also be known through one or more formal accidents or properties that inhere within this new unity which we

⁸⁵Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, 1987 Morelli edition, p. 78.

⁸⁶Stewart, p. 12.

⁸⁷Stewart, p. 106.

are discovering (in Lonergan's terminology, an assembly of formal accidents refers to a set of explanatory conjugates), we discover a thing (the intelligible unity of a thing) and also possibly other properties that might inhere in a given thing (belonging to the nature or the intelligibility of a given thing). We can thus say that a body can exist within a thing (a body exists as a function of a thing) although, on the other hand, we cannot say that a thing exists within a body. A thing does not exist as the function of a body. The reality of a body is not the reality of a thing although the reality of a body does suggest or point to the possible, greater reality which exists when we refer to the being of a thing.

By way of application thus, when thinking about the potency of a thing (the central potency of a thing), all that is known or all that exists with respect to the central potency of a body as one species of central potency is something that also exists when we think about the central potency of a thing. Experiences of central material potency are subsumed or they are included within an explanatory notion of central potency which perhaps is best identified *in words* which speak about the existence of a species of formal potency or the existence of an intellectualized form of central potency. What is simply known through acts of sense or what is simply experienced through our acts of sense (apart from any acts of understanding) is transcended through an ordering which now exists among our acts of understanding as one act of understanding is ordered or orientated to other acts of understanding (the later possible reception of other, new acts of understanding).

In the kind of language which we find in Lonergan, within a context that is shaped by anticipations of explanatory acts of understanding (a desire to learn about the existence of things or about how different things relate to each other), acts of sense exist in a manner that is now patterned or orientated toward the possible reception of later acts of understanding. The matter which we are attending to is being shaped or formed or it receives a shape or form that is determined by our asking of questions which seek understanding and by a construction of images which seek to find one or more apt images that can trigger a desired act of understanding. And so, as we attend to this work of shaping or forming in the context of inquiry and our asking questions, we move from a notion of central potency which is to be simply correlated with an experience of embodied matter (apart from any act of understanding) toward a more abstract or remote notion of central potency. In this instance, perhaps we can say that matter is being supplanted by potency since an experience of material potency is not too adequate or too sufficient if we want to speak about the potency of a thing and not merely or simply about the potency of a body.⁸⁸

⁸⁸See the distinction which Lonergan draws in *Understanding and Being*, p. 340, where he says that when potency is connected to intelligibility (to form), it comes to have an intelligibility that somehow belongs to it (an intelligibility that is derived from form and not from itself as potency). By itself or itself, matter is unintelligible. But, in relation to an intelligibility that we can find within any given instance of matter, matter can be viewed as possessing a degree of intelligibility and a degree of unintelligibility. As we shift from matter as a simple lack of intelligibility to matter as having a degree of intelligibility in a context which can speak about intellectually patterned experiences of matter (our experience of data and acts of sense is being mediated by the data and acts of our understanding), we move into a more abstract notion of potency. The potency ceases to exist as mere matter. The potency which we come to know about does not exist as a datum of sense that is simply or merely experienced in an act of sense since, within a context that is created by scientific inquiry and reflection, potency now exists as a datum of our intellectual and reflective consciousness. A potency can be known through inferences that can be made through our acts of reasoning and understanding. See what Lonergan says in *Insight*, p. 459 where, in a similar way, he argues that, in knowing many different

Conjugate Potencies: Descriptive Potencies versus Explanatory Potencies

With respect to a species of potency which is not now the potency of a body nor the potency of a thing, a second type of potency presents itself if we attend to the existence of accidental, *transient* potencies which inhere or which belong to the matter of a body or which *sometimes* inhere or belong to the potency of a thing.⁸⁹ Descriptive accidental potencies and explanatory accidental potencies (or, in other words, descriptive conjugate potencies and explanatory conjugate potencies) should be distinguished from anything which exists as a central potency. A real distinction also exists between descriptive conjugate potencies and explanatory conjugate potencies as one moves from acts of sense to acts of

kinds of things, potency is not to be simply correlated with what is known through an act of sense. If we are to talk intelligently about the potency of a given thing, if we are to identify a potency in some way, we must infer what a potency must be as we move from absences of potency to conclusions which can identify a specific potency.

In the example which Lonergan gives in *Insight*, p. 459, if “heat” is a form (in other words, if, to some extent, there is an absence of potency in the nature of heat), the potency which would exist in terms of a potency that would be related to the nature of heat would be a potency that is not known simply through experiencing any lower temperatures. Experiences of lower temperature suggest that lack of warmth does exist as a potency. What is warm at one level can become warmer at another level if means are found to increase the intensity of a given temperature although, in such a situation, we would be comparing two experiences of warmth where one experience comes across as less intense than what is given to us in the context of a second experience. Through our senses, we can directly experience the varying temperatures of certain things (even if we know that, at one given static temperature, wood will always feel warmer to one's touch than metal). In other words, an experience of lower temperature does not directly indicate that something which feels cold is without some degree of warmth. A complete absence of some kind of temperature (a complete absence of some kind of heat) cannot be achieved in this life (as best as we can know) since, in lowering any given temperature, some kind of energy or effort needs to be expended and, in making any effort, a degree of heat is generated and is passed on. A limited presence of heat cannot be totally avoided or excluded and so, as a consequence, a pure experience of coldness is something that cannot be given to us in this life. It cannot be averted to as a datum which suffices for understanding and knowing the specific potency which is to be associated with heat (heat as a nature, heat as an intelligibility). In its meaning, in its intelligibility, heat excludes what does not belong to it (tersely put, it excludes what is not heat) and so, it is by our thinking and reasoning about the nature of heat that we can conclude to the nature of a possible specific privation which is always associated with heat (a potency which refers to a total absence of heat but which also refers to a disposition that can exist in things: a disposition that is open to possible receptions of heat as these can occur through actuations which exist in accord with what is known about the nature or intelligibility which properly belongs to heat). From an induction which knows that cold exists as a privation relative to the absence of privation which exists in heat and from an understanding that knows about the nature of heat – when these two forms of knowing are combined with each other – then we can conclude that cold exists as a privation or potency in conjunction or in relation to what is known about heat. No specific potency is adequately known if we only attend to the data and acts of sense. A self-transcending act of understanding is also needed if we are to transcend what is known by us if we only strictly attend to what is known by us in the givenness of data and our acts of sense.

understanding.

By way of contrast, to understand better the kind of meaning that we want to grasp when speaking about accidental potencies or conjugate potencies, unlike an accidental or conjugate potency, a “substance” traditionally refers to a subject or a thing in terms of what exists in itself and not in terms of how it exists in something else. While certain things exist only if they exist in another, a second and higher class of being refers to what can exist apart from having to be in something else. Substance, thing, essence, or quiddity all thus refer to an *ens per se* (a being by itself).⁹⁰ The substance or being of one thing cannot be attributed to the substance or being of another subject or thing if each exists as a “being by itself.” But, on the other hand, properties or accidents exist in a manner which refers to an existence that is in something else and this kind of thing or being can come and go while the subject or thing to which a property refers or inheres remains substantially the same. A person can be born, for instance, without hands or feet and yet such a person retains his or her humanity. A person continues to be a human being. In the attribution of properties which come and go in the life or in the existence of different things, different substances, or different subjects, Aristotle's *Categories* had distinguished nine categories or nine classes of accidents which either inhere in a substance and are affirmed of it or which refer to external causes and circumstances that should be noted in talking about any given thing. Aristotle's list speaks about quantity, quality, relation, action, passion, place, time, posture, and habit.⁹¹ As has been noted earlier, these categories (existing as “external accidents”) all exist as terms of acts of sensing (and not as terms of acts of understanding). Any external accident which exists as the term of an act of sense refers to a descriptive conjugate potency.

However, in order to know about accidents which exist as “internal accidents” (as terms of acts of understanding), a different species of inquiry is required: one which can attend to how things can be known apart from how they are sensed or perceived from a viewpoint that is grounded in our acts of sensing and the relativity which exists in our acts of sensing. Acts of sense are intrinsically conditioned by an orientation that is geared to a direct knowledge of empirical, material conditions. But, on the other hand, acts of understanding are conditioned by an orientation which seeks to detach an understanding subject (through his or her acts of understanding) from any kind of direct reliance or direct dependence on the existence of any material conditions. As has already been noted, things (substances) which exist in terms of how they exist in themselves and which are to be known in terms of how they exist in themselves and how they are related to each other are to be sharply distinguished from things or bodies which exist or are known in terms of how they relate to us (our acts of

⁸⁹To avoid misunderstanding, please distinguish between “accidental” and “incidental.” Cf. *Insight*, p. 462. Whenever anything happens in a manner that is apparently lacking in any reason or intelligibility, we speak about incidental events (circumstantial occurrences). But, whenever something exists or occurs in a way which refers or points to the presence of some kind of rational or intelligible connection, we speak about accidents. Accidents come and go and yet they should not be seen as incidents.

Please also note that, in *Insight*, Lonergan prefers to speak about conjugate properties or conjugate determinations before he speaks about the nature of things as things are distinct from the nature of bodies.

⁹⁰Stewart, p. 167; Hardon, “Substance,” *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, p. 523.

⁹¹Aquinas, *Sententia super Physicam*, 3, 5, 322; *Confessions*, trans. Ryan, p. 380, n. 2.

cognition).⁹² Accidents or properties which exist as terms of acts of understanding and which are known in terms of how they relate to each other exist as accidents or properties which exist as explanatory conjugate potencies.

With respect, however, to what can be further known about the nature of accidents and the existence of different kinds of accidents (the differing kinds of accidents referring to different kinds of potency), if we first attend to these categories within a context of meaning which attends to what is known through our acts of sense and to perceptions of unity which point to the existence of a body, besides these or in addition to these, we can also point to movements or operations which can also be observed or seen (movements and operations which also exist as accidents because, in their own way also, they come and go for reasons which have yet to be understood through some kind of scientific study that knows about the existence of a possible explanation). Some accidents properly exist as movements or as operations and some exist as the term of movements or operations. The color of our hair, for instance, exists as an accident. It does not exist as a movement or an operation although it exists as the term of a movement or operation (a movement or operation which has yet to be identified). The growing of our hair, on the other hand, also exists as an accident but it exists as a movement which occurs within something else (a subject or host, for want of a better term).

If we go on then to think about the existence of some bodies and the kind of relation which can exist between a given body and any motion that it can undertake or receive, a number of material components can be identified and these all exist as varying species of material *substratum*. As passive material causes, they make it possible for some movements or operations to occur (possibly now at this time or possibly at some other time). In other words, while, in general, matter is needed for the existence of a *body* (the matter is to be equated with a body) and while an intellectually qualified or an

⁹²See how Lonergan first distinguishes between “the similarities of things in their relations to us” and “the similarities of things in their relations to one another” in *Insight*, p. 61. Aristotle's categories can be identified in a context which works with what we know if we work from within a perspective that is governed by how things are perceived in relation to how we perceive them through our individual acts of sense. But, if we find ways to determine how things relate with each other apart from our individual acts of sense, we can move toward a higher viewpoint and a knowledge of accidents that varies from those that are known through our sensing acts. An order of description is succeeded and incorporated within a higher order of explanation as a higher order of accidents or conjugates (an explanatory set of accidents or conjugates) subsumes a lower order of accidents or conjugates (a lower order which refers to descriptive accidents, descriptive conjugates). In this context, within the order of description, we understand what is meant when it is said about the universe that “the earth is at rest, and the sun rises and sets.” From a commonsense viewpoint, it is obvious that the earth does not move. It is the sun which moves. But, as we shift into explanatory accidents (explanatory conjugates), we understand things in a different way when we now say that “the planets move in approximately elliptical orbits with the sun at the foci of the ellipses.” Cf. Stewart, p. 20. In moving from a descriptive apprehension of meaning to an explanatory apprehension of meaning, not only is new meaning added to meanings that are already known but, at the same time, by way of the kind of addition which occurs, common apprehensions of meaning are challenged with respect to the propriety of their adequacy or their sufficiency. Developments in explanatory understanding encourage developments in the understanding which traditionally belongs to the wisdom of common sense. An inherited tradition of meaning comes under scrutiny and conditions are created which can lead to a series of internal developments.

intellectual patterned experience of matter is needed as a point of departure for understanding the nature of a *thing*, differing material components are needed if a given being is to enjoy more than the being of its mere existence. If a body or a thing (a substance) is to have a life of its own and if it is to engage in actions and operations which properly belong to it, it must have a constellation of material components which would properly allow for the actuation of activities which would otherwise not occur. With a brain, for instance, we can begin to think and reason. With eyes, we can begin to see. With hands and feet, we can begin to crawl and later walk as we use our hands for other things. With vocal chords, we can begin to sing. The life of every creature normally begins with some set of material accidental potencies and it typically ends with these same accidental material potencies. A man, for instance, as his life develops, can begin to use his brain in operations which can reveal the workings of an understanding mind (brain and mind being not the same thing) and, at the end of his life, he can lose his mind but not his brain which remains for him as a potency for possible intellectual operations. Seeing also emerges as an activity which presupposes an organ for seeing. But, with the passage of years, this activity can also lessen and disappear even as one's eyes remain as a potency for what might yet again happen or occur.

In thinking about these accidental potencies, some are obviously more important than others. A human being can be born without eyes and, yet, the humanity remains. But, if a given being literally has no brain, can we say that a given being truly exists as a human being? Without the material substratum which exists in a human brain, no potency can exist for any higher level of activity which would occur if there could be the actuation of any intellectual operations within the life of a human being. Put bluntly, since no human being can be born without a brain and so live or exist as a human being, the matter of a person's brain appears to belong to a species of matter which properly belongs to a human being who exists as a distinct kind of being or substance. In this type of situation, as description shifts into understanding, the human brain as an instance of matter (which is initially known as a datum of sense) becomes known as an instance of matter which belongs to the matter or the potency of a thing (and not simply to the matter or potency of a body) although, in another sense, as simply or merely an instance of matter, one's brain exists only as a descriptive accidental potency and not as an explanatory accidental potency.

With respect then to the existence of accidental potencies and the conceptuality which Lonergan uses to speak about these accidental potencies, two points merit notice and a need for greater clarification and understanding. First, on the supposition that distinct things exist (things which are first experienced as bodies before they can be regarded and understood as things), in the language of Lonergan's conceptuality, accidental potencies are best spoken about if one speaks about conjugate potencies.⁹³ "Wood has the capacity to be hard or soft...Fido, the puppy, has the potency, capacity to become Fido, the old dog."⁹⁴ As has been noted, a given thing can change without ceasing to be the thing that it is as a substance or thing. However, in preferring to speak about a conjugate potency instead of speaking about an accidental potency, a meaning is introduced which directly speaks about a property which can come and go although in a manner which refers to how it is joined or related to other properties or other variables (properties or variables which exist as other kinds of conjugates).⁹⁵ The emphasis given to the role and place of relations points to the presence of an ordered conjunction of properties or variables: an inner intelligible relation that joins variables into a unity which exists among these variables and

93Stewart, p. 165.

94Stewart, p. 165.

95Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 462.

which can be recognized through apprehensions that can be given to one through one's acts of understanding.

Second, in distinguishing descriptive conjugate potencies from explanatory conjugate potencies and in understanding how these two kinds of conjugate potency can be distinguished from each other, it can be noticed that, as bodies and things go through trials or processes of one kind or another, descriptive conjugate potencies can change and be replaced with new descriptive conjugate potencies. At times, changes in descriptive conjugate potencies can suggest or point to changes in explanatory conjugate potencies (although not always and not typically). An explanation is desired when one wants to understand why variations exist in one's experience of differing descriptive conjugate potencies. Water, for instance, can exist as either a liquid, a gas, or a solid. Such a thing is sensed and one notices differences among descriptive conjugate potencies as one moves from a liquid to a gas to a solid. One set of descriptive potencies exists as a potency for the emergence of another set of descriptive conjugate potencies. The differences in sense data all point to differences in descriptive conjugate potencies although all these differences can be surmounted or reduced to unity if, by an act of understanding, we grasp an explanation which, within it, would include a knowledge that is able to speak about the existence of explanatory conjugate potencies. To understand how water can be converted from one state of being to another, one's understanding identifies a second form or species of capacity or openness which exists in water (a form or species of capacity which is not to be simply equated with the experience which one may have of a material substratum). In other words, beyond the materiality of a needed physical substratum, the substratum that is first known through acts of sense must also have a species of inner ability or inner capacity which points to another kind of conjugate potency (another kind of substratum, if you will): a potency which is not directly perceived by any act of sense but which is grasped by an act of understanding which has moved from an effect to a cause or, in other words, which has moved from a datum of sense to a datum of intellectual consciousness. What is known in this kind of potency is known to exist as a species of formal or rational conjugate potency.

The shift which thus occurs as one moves from descriptive conjugate potencies to explanatory conjugate potencies in turn serves as evidence or as data which more amply points to the fact that, in receiving any act of understanding, the potency which exists in our understanding is not to be identified with the potency which exists in our merely having a brain. The same brain as a material substratum must be informed by a formal or vital capacity that is informed by good health and by acts of inquiry (by an active potency) that yearns for increments in the understanding which one already has. Inner and outer conditions all need to be adverted to and they all need to be adequately satisfied. By way of an extrapolation which thus moves from an understanding and knowledge of particular things to an understanding and knowledge of very many things, if we are to have a fully adequate understanding about the place and role of potency in the entire scheme of things as this exists with respect to the world that we live in, we must attend to a rather large number of variables which are distinct from each other and, at the same time, attend to how they are all related to each other in a manner that mutually implies and conditions each other. The potency of something which might exist at one level helps to explain why another potency can perhaps exist for something else to occur or something else to exist at another level. As has been already noted or suggested, potencies exist in a way which indicates that they all mutually imply and condition each other. The potency which exists in a datum of sense is a potency because it is directed toward having an intelligibility which can change the potency that is present in a datum of sense into a potency that now exists within a datum of intelligibility. But if or furthermore, we think about the potency that is present within the datum of a meaning, the datum of an idea, the datum of an intelligibility, or the datum of a conception, this same potency not only exists as a

potency because it is orientated or directed toward a reception which refers to the possible being of a truth or the possible being of a fact but also because these later potencies in some way derive or are grounded in potencies which exist in the mere givenness that is present within experiences of sense data. If the potency of an intelligibility exists as a potency for being or truth, then this same potency exists as it is because it refers to that which could be intelligible or what can be made intelligible within an experienced datum or data of sense (if certain conditions are properly fulfilled). If meaning is to exist in its own right as a potency (if it is to exist as a potency for truth), this same meaning must refer to what is being understood by a postulated meaning or what can be understood if any meaning is found to exist within it, or if any meaning is to be applied to it, or if any meaning is being referred to something which, as only simply given, as given, is simply devoid of any meaning. The potency present in meaning exists as a potency for truth while the potency present in meaning refers to the potency which exists within a datum or data of sense. As has been already noted, in the traditional conceptuality which we can use, we can speak about a first potency and a second potency and how we can distinguish between a first potency and a second potency. In cognitional terms, a potency for meaning is succeeded by a potency for truth in a context which works with an understanding of one's understanding as a heuristic that is used in order to distinguish one species of metaphysical principle from another.

Moving on however, as we think about this kind of ordering which exists in our human cognition and as we also advert to how a similar ordering of potencies can be found among the different natural and human sciences (for instance, physics attends to movements between external objects and chemistry attends to movements as they exist within objects), additional potencies can also be specified as we move from a lower science to a higher science. Beyond first and second potencies, we can speak about a third potency and then we can speak about a fourth and then a fifth until we get to an order of meaning and reality that is wholly lacking in any kind of potency. Nothing more can be added. These additional potencies can be verified within the data of our human consciousness in the context of our inner experience of selves as knowers and doers. In terms directly dealing with levels of consciousness as these exist in the life of human subjects, in truths of fact, for instance, a third potency can be adverted to: a potency which refers to a potency for good or a potency for value. From acts of sense, yes, we move toward acts of understanding and then toward acts of judgement and then, from there, we can move into questions which ask if, through moral judgment, we can know about goods which can be realized through decisions and actions that are constitutive of our moral lives. A true or objective knowledge of reality is turned into a new potency (a third potency) as we move from an order of knowing into an order of doing that involves some kind of outer or external action which transcends what exists and what is known within our human acts of cognition. The givenness of one's moral life can then become a new fourth potency if, in one's moral life, a possible openness can be detected which exists as an openness that is receptive to gifts of grace which can come to us from God. Within the depths of a person's consciousness, changes can occur (a change of attitude or perspective or perhaps it is an act of forgiveness) and in these kind of changes, a shift can occur in the orientation of our consciousness. A person lives for other reasons; does other deeds. A person's subjectivity changes even if the identity of a given person does not change.⁹⁶

⁹⁶For a more technical understanding about how it is possible to speak about species of potencies which exist beyond first and second potencies (a third potency, a fourth potency, a fifth potency, and so on), we best attend to Lonergan's notion of sublation (a notion which can also be found in the theology of Karl Rahner). Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 241. From a context that is determined by his understanding of human cognition (the subjectivity of a human subject), it is possible

In turning lastly to the concreteness of human understanding and in attending to the order or structure of potency which exists within it, while, in the metaphysical order of things, it has been said that a datum of sense exists as a potency in terms of possibly receiving a new datum which refers to the presence of an intelligibility which, in turn, can exist as a potency for possibly receiving a datum which refers to the true reality or being a thing, in the order of cognition, a similar structure can be determined (although with a number of modifications). An act of sensing, although an act (an operation) and as an act or operation, also exists as a potency. An act of sensing within the dynamic of human inquiry functions as a basic potency or it exists as a basic potency when it is employed in a context that is orientated toward the possible reception of one or more later acts of understanding. Every act of understanding enjoys a certain completion or a perfection which is endemic to acts of understanding. No real distinction exists between an act of understanding and its term (the term referring to what is being understood in any given act of understanding). The two cannot be separated from each other. And, as we have noted, every direct act of understanding also exists as a potency when the context is such that it is orientated toward the possible reception of an act of reflective understanding (which exists in a judgment). In addition, an expertise in understanding any given subject combined with an expertise in making certain kinds of judgment both refer to two kinds of intellectual habit which can properly exist as potencies within the order of our human cognition whenever a potential knower moves from a habit of direct understanding or from a habit of wisdom in judgment toward a new act of direct understanding or toward a new act of reflective understanding. Whenever any of these transitions occurs, a potency is being distinguished from an act. One kind of potency is being distinguished from another kind of act and, in the same way, potencies are being distinguished from each other.

By way of conclusion this, since no potency can be understood apart from the existence of principles,

to show how, through the principle of sublation, we can speak about a hierarchal ordering which exists among the different sciences. The knowledge that exists in one science becomes a point of departure for new kinds of question that can lead to the emergence of new sciences. The subject matter that is being understood in a given science becomes more fully understood if we can move toward a science that looks for intelligibilities which can explain data or phenomena which, otherwise, cannot be understood if we continue to rely on intelligibilities or sets of laws that were intended to explain other, different aspects that are present within our experience of data and which have been the focus on our scientific attention. Chemical laws, for example, cannot explain how reproduction occurs within the data of our experience. But, if we enter into biological inquiries of one kind or another, we can begin to understand how replications occur among living things. Turning to another similar example, in the science of sensitive psychology, we understand the behavior of living beings which are capable to locomotion (we understand the life of animals). But, if we are to understand the behavior of human beings (who, to some extent, possess an animal nature), we must look toward what can be known if we ask questions which lead to a science of rational psychology. The sublation which occurs within human subjects as one level of consciousness gives way to another is reflected in a more public way if we look at how all the different sciences have arisen on upon another and how they respectively stand one to another. At every level of achievement, something remains which is not being understood. More understanding is needed and, as we experience this lack and need for understanding, a new potency presents itself. A new potency can be identified within the data that are known through our acts of sense and through the asking of new questions which, by their asking, reveals the presence of a new potency that awaits our need for new, direct acts of understanding.

reasons, or actions which do not exist as potencies, for this reason, it is not possible for us to speak about the meaning of any potency unless we also advert in some way to the existence of other metaphysical principles which need to be recognized if we are to properly and fully speak about potencies. By one principle (call it “act”), a potency is distinguished from its contrary (that which is not in potency) and then, by invoking a second principle (call it “form”), a potency is distinguished from other possible instances of it (one kind of potency is not this other kind of potency). If an adequate understanding of form requires an understanding of potency and act and if an adequate understanding of act requires an understanding which adverts to the necessary presence of potency and form, then, for these reasons, we can speak about an internal connection that links these three principles all together into an interlocking set (an inner connection or relation which points to a closed set of terms where each term mutually defines the other and where the reality of each term exists as a function of the reality of the other terms).