

## EXPERIENCE OF BEING AND HORIZON OF BEING<sup>†</sup>

according to Emerich Coreth and Bernard Lonergan.

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Transcendental method already has a history within Neo-scholasticism, and its characteristics have recently been recounted by Otto Muck S.J.<sup>1</sup> In the *reditus ad subiectum* [turn to the subject] which is central to transcendental method, consciousness plays an obviously important role. All authors-who try to come to a critical understanding of human cognition and metaphysics with this method-attend to the structure of human consciousness, with its dynamism and its significance for knowing and for all the activities of the human spirit. The goal of our reflections here is to articulate the meaning of consciousness within the philosophical problematic that has been systematically developed by Emerich Coreth and Bernard Lonergan in terms of the transcendental method.

We restrict ourselves to a topic discussed in Coreth's *Metaphysics*<sup>2</sup> and Lonergan's *Insight*<sup>3</sup> that has wide ramifications. Because this point is so central in their thought (which is why it attracts our interest), we believe it will help us in understanding these systems of thought in a fundamental way and in articulating their meaning more clearly. The reason why we have chosen these two authors lies less in wanting to make an arbitrary comparison and more in the conviction that there is an inner relation between their two systems of thought. While Coreth, by his use of the

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<sup>†</sup> [Originally published as *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizont nach E. Coreth und B. Lonergan*, in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 89 (1967) pp. 294-338, this text has been primarily translated by Mr. Roland Krismer and Br. Dunstan Robidoux OSB although with the help and assistance of Dr. Michael Hoonhout who suggested that this work be done as a special theology project; Dr. Donald E. Buzzelli who carefully analyzed draft texts, drawing upon his knowledge of the thought of Fr. Bernard Lonergan, Fr. Emerich Coreth, and Fr. Giovanni Sala to compose a number of interpretive footnotes and to raise questions about the meaning of certain difficult passages; and, lastly, Fr. Sala, who was able to examine our translations to suggest rewordings of phrase and term that could more exactly express his intended meaning. A team of persons has worked together.]

<sup>1</sup>Otto Muck, *Die transzendente Methode der scholastischen Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Innsbruck 1961. [*The Transcendental Method*, trans. William D. Siedensticker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968)].

<sup>2</sup>Emerich Coreth S.J., *Metaphysik. Eine methodisch-systematischen Grundlegung*, Innsbruck <sup>1</sup>1961, <sup>2</sup>1964. The quotations we cite are taken from the second edition, which differs from the first edition only in slight matters of wording. [An abbreviated, truncated English edition of Coreth's *Metaphysik*, prepared by Joseph Donceel, was published in 1968 by Herder and Herder, New York, and is simply titled as *Metaphysics*. This same work also includes a critique written by Bernard J. F. Lonergan: "Metaphysics as Horizon," 197-219.]

<sup>3</sup>Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, London-New York-Toronto <sup>1</sup>1957. [*Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 3, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (University of Toronto Press, 1992). Citations will be to the original pagination.]

transcendental method, carries out a brilliant deduction (moving from the reality of the question to the horizon of being as its ultimate *a priori* condition), Lonergan, for his part, tries to formulate the relation between the horizon of being and human consciousness as it is actuated on the intellectual level.

## I. ANALYSIS OF CORETH

### 1. From the Question to the Horizon of Being

For Coreth, the question is the starting point for analyzing human cognition. The starting point is not a concept that we have about the question, nor is it a statement about it. Rather, it is the question as performance, as a fact in the life of each single person who has gone beyond the purely biological pattern of experience. The question alone is a beginning that justifies itself, since every initial position which one chooses in order to analyze cognition will necessarily imply the question about its starting point. Moreover, the question, and it alone, determines the method by which one's inquiry is to be carried out. Since the question marks the beginning of inquiry, the question about the beginning (which presents itself to us as first in the critical grounding of human cognition) becomes the question about the question. The question reflects on itself, and thus indicates that this self-reflection is the method of one's analysis.

The method by which Coreth consistently develops his whole metaphysics is therefore a questioning about the performance of questioning itself. Therefore, it does not try to find out if the performance is itself possible, since this question is already answered by the performance itself, which is unquestionable. Coreth wants rather to find out how and through what means this performance is possible. While an animal deals with sensible data without transcending purely biological concerns, the human being finds himself a victim of his sense of wonder as he unavoidably experiences tensions that emerge in his many questions that ask "why?". These experiences, moreover, accompany him throughout his entire life: from the initial stage of insatiable curiosity present in a child's life to the later stages present in the wisdom and experience of old age which, yet, retains the sense that there is much to be learned. Why does the human person not succeed in suppressing his inner unrest and his constant asking of questions which goes beyond the experience of pure facts and the dominance of purely biological concerns? Why is he not able to prevent becoming a question or a problem to himself? Such a question is already a transcendental question: a question about the conditions of possibility for that activity of cognition which is the asking itself. That which is questioned and for which an answer is expected is the question as such in so far as it is the initial base which does not refer to something prior in cognition. It is that which precedes inquiry. Our question here is about that element a) through which inquiry is an unavoidable reality in human mental life, and b) which is constitutively involved in every particular performance of questioning. Such an element gives questioning a meaning independently of whether or not a particular question makes any sense or is perhaps lacking any rational basis. This is what Coreth turns into the goal of his inquiry when he asks about the transcendental conditions of questioning as questioning.

In the first chapter of the *Metaphysik*, he develops his project. The condition of the question as question is not only full ignorance but also, and just as much, a radical knowledge. The ignorance is complete. That the starting point of human cognition is a *tabula rasa* [erased board] is found in

the common experience of all persons. However, the knowledge is also complete though it is implicit and inarticulate and thus in need of determination and specification. In order to be able to ask questions, lack of knowledge alone is not sufficient. An animal does not know, but cannot ask any questions. For us, in order for our questioning to be meaningful, for it to have a direction so that we can immediately recognize that what we have found is exactly what we have been asking about or seeking, we must (already) know. Hence, the question is internally determined through cognizant ignorance (a knowing ignorance) “which, knowing about its own not-knowing, goes beyond the limit of its knowledge to anticipate the not-known. From our intelligent ignorance, the desire for knowledge originates and from this desire for knowledge our questions originate.”<sup>4</sup> This ignorance or not knowing which knows or, in a word, this pre-knowledge that makes questioning possible, Coreth refers to as the “horizon of the question” (a designation that he borrows from Husserl). Consequently, the specification of this pre-knowledge, which is approached by transcendental method, amounts to the specification of the horizon within which a question arises and within which the entire process of cognition is carried out.

This pre-knowledge, in so far as it is the basis of the question in general (i.e., the movement that transcends the known toward what is not known), is a “pure” prior knowledge. It is pure because it possesses no objective content and therefore is not *a posteriori*. It does not emerge from experience. Since we pose questions about the ultimate condition of the possibility of questioning and hence about the whole range of knowing, such a condition cannot be the result of knowledge itself. Each content only explains why a specific question exists. However, such a content is not able to explain the basic movement beyond the known toward what is not known (namely, why a particular question is being asked). This pure prior knowledge is a knowledge - its type and manner we will explain further below - of what is not known so that it makes possible the movement of the spirit toward what is not known, and this movement is the question.

In addition, this prior knowledge proves to be prior knowledge about the questionable in general since we can ask about all that is, all that is questionable. This first specification about our pure prior knowledge as prior knowledge about the totality of all that is questionable is not a tautology, though it may seem so at first glance. The reason plainly is that, by the manner of our procedure, the questionable gradually emerges as an ultimate category which cannot be subsumed under a more general category, but which can be more clearly determined. Such is the goal of the steps constitutive of the transcendental method: Being is understood as correlative of the basic dynamism of our intellect. In other words: intelligence is inside reality insofar as only by and through it can reality be defined.

This questionable is being since nothing belonging to the questionable can withdraw itself from the question whether it “is” and what it “is.” However, being (contingent being) exists through its participating in Being (*esse*).<sup>†</sup> Thus, prior knowledge - on account of which we can ask questions about all that is questionable - is about Being. For human beings, Being is always already

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<sup>4</sup>*Metaphysik*, 297; 113.

<sup>†</sup> [Please note that there is a difference between beings and Being (*esse*). Besides individual or contingent beings, there is the act of being, which sometimes is identified with Being in general.]

meaningful. Though the human person is born no less than an animal as *tabula rasa*, he is one who is always already understanding being. For the human spirit, being has meaning. Therefore he is able to emerge from his initial ignorance. He is able to ask questions. Being is the horizon of our questioning, and so it is the horizon of human inquiry and cognition. It constitutes the basic Apriori of our spirit. Spirit is spirit, i.e., it knows and wills because it is drawn by this pure prior knowledge of being; nobody is able to teach this pre-knowledge to him because it is what gives every human being the possibility of learning.

Before we ask the crucial question about the origin of the horizon of being, following Coreth, we mention two basic characteristics of our pure prior knowledge of being. The statement that the toward-which of questioning is being expresses the absolute demand made by a question. We want to know if something “is” and what it “is”: we do not want to know what it is or how it is in relation to us or to any other limiting condition but, rather, we want to know something as it is in itself (i.e., as transcending any condition). The being about which we ask questions is that which we cannot sidestep or skirt. It is an absolute that, insofar as it is and to the extent that it is, excludes non-being. Moreover, as being, it can only be unconditioned if it is unlimited; if there are no further dimensions of reality beyond being whereby a being would be completely different from what it is within our limited horizon. In other words, because being intends the whole of reality, a knowing carried out within the horizon of being, even though it is the knowing of an individual, restricted being, it possesses an absolute validity which depends on no other further condition be it on the part of the knowing subject, or on the part of any other reality. “What ‘is’ or ‘exists’ refers as such to the whole of reality; it “is,” as it were, on the level of all reality. Later on, we will return to this fundamental characteristic referring to the unlimitedness of being when we examine the meaning of consciousness as the ground of the horizon of being. Above all else, however, we now want to understand why the question about the transcendental conditions of the question leads in the long run to consciousness as the origin of our pure pre-knowledge of being.

The way of thinking opened up by the question about the horizon of being was developed as a transcendental condition of being, in his first twelve paragraphs. In paragraph thirteen, Coreth asks a question about origin: from where does this horizon of being as, simultaneously, both unlimited knowledge and ignorance, takes its origin? How does it come about that we anticipate the whole which we are seeking so that everything, from the onset, receives meaning for us with respect to being, which is later recognized as such when an individual question finds its answer? If we correctly understand him, Coreth gives the following answer: the origin of the horizon of being cannot be only a purely anticipatory knowing, a prior or foreknowledge or sketch of the knowable. Rather, it must be a knowledge that possesses its known as something that “is.” It is only owing to this possession that I can recognize or detect being. By it, therefore, being gains a meaning for me. Now this knowledge, which possesses the known, is knowledge of the performance itself: “As I engage in the performance of my questioning, I directly know about it as a truly proper performance. I know, that I ask; I know, that I am engaged in asking and am performing the asking; I know, that I am executing the performance of this asking. I know that the performance of my questioning “is,” that it exists as being in itself. A being is given in the performance of asking and knowing and this being coincides directly with knowing, in the knowledge of performance. The performance knows itself as being and being knows itself as performance. The knowing posits itself as being, and the being carries itself out as knowing - in the immediate unity of being and knowing in the performance.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>136; <sup>1</sup>162f.

Because of this identity of being and knowledge in the performance of questioning, Coreth refers to an immediate experience of being where being and knowing coincide. On this luminous identity of being with itself, our pure prior knowledge of being is based: “From the immediate experience of being and the certainty of performance (the being of performance), I know about the being of the performance and I know, from it, about being or the meaning of being in general. It is the origin of a sketch or design for the horizon of being in general. Only within it is inquiry possible: questions about the other as being or knowledge of the other as being.”<sup>6</sup>

## 2. The horizon of being and the experience of being in consciousness

Therefore, we have already arrived at consciousness. Just when the horizon of our questioning and our knowing is reached, Coreth asks about the transcendental condition which grounds the all-embracing prior knowledge that we have referred to as the horizon of being. This he finds in consciousness: in the identity of being and knowing which accompanies each act of our cognition and on account of which each act of cognition is a conscious act. The question necessarily stands at the beginning of this long process leading to cognition. In so far as the question is conscious, however, this implies that there is a point at the center of our intellectual spirit where being, questioning, and knowing coincide in an immediate identity. Being is illuminated from within itself. From this point, spirit or intellect is able to sketch the horizon of illumination [*Gelichtetheit*], an illumination on the basis of which everything that is first asked about and which is afterwards known enters into the field of being.

Let us try to determine more precisely how our horizon of being is grounded in the experience of being given in consciousness. The difficulty which understandably presents itself in our efforts to clarify this fundamental point in our investigation of human cognition, by means of the transcendental method, is that we find ourselves faced with a *circulus vitiosus* [vicious circle], or, at least, with the fact that we have not sufficiently clarified how pertinent elements are related to each other. As has been shown by our previous line of thought, questions and knowledge about individual beings only arise within the horizon of being which is *prior* to this questioning. Hence, Coreth speaks of a pure prior knowledge of being; of an *a priori* horizon of being. As he notes, “An *a priori* horizon forms the *precondition* for the possibility of the performance of questioning, knowing or other behavior which is directed toward particular knowledge of being.”<sup>7</sup> “The pure anticipation of the question as question does not head for being in particular but for being as a whole, i.e., for the pure horizon, within which alone one can ask about being and know being in particular.”<sup>8</sup> “Questioning is only possible if, pre-knowing and anticipating, I already know being in general and the meaning of being in general.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>137; <sup>1</sup>164.

<sup>7</sup>*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>100; <sup>1</sup>117.

<sup>8</sup>*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>119; <sup>1</sup>141.

<sup>9</sup>*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>135; <sup>1</sup>162. Author’s emphasis

In paragraph thirteen, however, it is said that it is only from that experience of being which is my questioning that I am oriented toward being and have a sense of the meaning of being in general. I thus have the horizon of being within which all questioning about all other things as being is possible and, therefore, within which questioning is possible in general, since every human question asks about being. But is the “first” question not within the horizon of being since, in the end, it cannot but be a question about being? Does it not intend being? When Coreth asks about the origin of the horizon of being, he asks about the empty and, yet, anticipatory knowledge of being that constitutively enters into the asking of every question. Obviously, this origin, whatever it may be, must take precedence over the horizon of being. As Coreth himself says: “This origin must itself be a knowledge. In fact, it must be a knowledge of being from which I can know about being in general and its meaning; from which I can draw up the horizon of being in general in my pre-knowledge. If, however, this prior knowledge lies at the origin of an outline of being, then it cannot be only a prior knowledge with respect to an outline of what can be known but, rather, it must be a knowledge in terms of possessing the known. The known, here, is to be understood as something which ‘is’, that is located in being and which can illuminate the meaning of being in general.”<sup>10</sup> Coreth then determines that this real being, which allows us to anticipate everything that is recognized as being, is our knowledge of our performance. This knowledge, which is not actuated in the [particular] question in a fully articulated manner (since every question involves a co-knowledge which determines the question as this or that), is knowledge about the being of the question itself: “Actuating the performance of my own questioning, I directly know of it that it is a truly proper performance.”<sup>11</sup>

This performance that a) I actuate as being, b) I know as being, and c) from which I outline the horizon of being which makes possible the asking of each question and every instance of concrete human knowing, is not very clear to us. Point a) offers no difficulty; however, point b) requires further examination. In what sense can one say that I know by asking questions that my questioning “is”? The main difficulty does not lie here, however. In our judgment, what needs above all to be clarified is point c): the “from which,” i.e., the relation between the horizon of being in general and my knowledge of my question as being.

## II. ANALYSIS OF LONERGAN

### 1. Cognition as structure

Having thus ascertained the problem, we move on to Lonergan. We believe that his analysis of consciousness<sup>12</sup> supplies all the elements for indicating where the origin of the horizon of being can

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<sup>10</sup>*Metaphysik*, 2135 f.; 1162.

<sup>11</sup>*Metaphysik*, 2136; 1162f.

<sup>12</sup>The main sources where Lonergan discusses consciousness are as follows: 1. *Insight*, Chapter XI: Self-Affirmation of the Knower, 319-47, above all, numbers 1-5. For moral consciousness, see Chapter XVIII, 1. 2-1. 3, 598-602; 2. 5, 612-16. 2; *De Constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica, Romae* 1956, pars V: *De conscientia humana*, 83-99 [*Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 7, The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ, Part 5*:

be found. We begin with a psychological analysis of consciousness itself, on the basis of the data that our conscious acts present. Such an analysis will lead us to an understanding of the importance that consciousness has for human cognition.<sup>13</sup>

What is consciousness? Lonergan defines it as follows: “*Sui suorumque actuum experientia stricte dicta atque interna* [an internal experience, in the strict sense, of oneself and one’s acts].”<sup>14</sup> Perhaps this definition *ex abrupto* [abruptly] is not able to explain much. It seems better to answer the first question with a second question: what is knowing? Explaining this complementary question is the fact that consciousness itself is a factor in knowing. It is a quality that is immanent in cognitive and appetitive acts. It is an element that lies beyond and beside the objective content of acts.<sup>15</sup> Lonergan’s answer to our complementary question is as follows: human knowing is not a simple, mysterious kind of confrontation where subject and object stand before each other. Instead, it is a structured activity composed of elements, in which no single element constitutes the whole of cognition since each element is a part of the whole.

The essential elements of this structure are as follows: experience, insight, and judgment. Neither experience nor insight nor judgment constitutes proper human knowing if examined apart from the others. All three, together, form a structured natural unit which is human knowing. Therefore, one must distinguish between knowing in a general sense and human knowing in a proper sense. With respect to knowing in general, meaning accrues with every element in the process of knowing: in sensing, conceiving, and imagining; in subsequent wonder and amazement; in inquiring and understanding; in the critical reflection which reaches the sufficient evidence needed for judgment; and, finally, in judging. But proper human knowing is judging which presupposes that the preceding process has been rightly carried out, and which unites the previously named elements. In a word, human cognition occurs in rational (justified) judgment.

In rational judgment, we know being, that which is. In the *prima mentis operatio* [first mental operation], we grasp what we know not as being but as intelligible. Prior to this first grasping, we

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*Human Consciousness*, trans. Michael G. Shields (University of Toronto Press, 2001), 157-89]; 3. *De Verbo Incarnato, Romae* 1964, edit. 3, 267-310; 4. Christ as Subject: A Reply: *Gregorianum* 40 (1959) 242-70 [*Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 4, Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (University of Toronto Press, 1988), 153-187]; 5. Cognition Structure: *Spirit as Inquiry*, Chicago 1964, 232 to 234 [*Collection*, 208-211]. In this second section, we publish what we have formulated more extensively in an article: *L’analisi della coscienza umana in Bernard Lonergan: Contributo preliminare al problema cristologico: La Scuola Cattolica* 91 (1966) 187-213.

<sup>13</sup>This sequence corresponds to Lonergan’s general method: one must look at psychic acts and their nature more exactly before one shifts to a metaphysical analysis or, in our case, to a critical analysis of cognition. See B. Lonergan, *The Concept of Verbum in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas* I: *Theological Studies* 7 (1946) 392; III: vol. 8 (1947) 404. [*Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 2, Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (University of Toronto Press, 1988), 59, 106].

<sup>14</sup>*De Constitutione Christi* 83 [*Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* 157].

<sup>15</sup>*Insight* XI 1: 1320f.

know what we grasp with our senses as something experienced; i.e. as purely given, pure datum. On the level of judgment, both the given and the intelligible are known in terms of being. In the early phases of knowing, however, i.e., at the level of experiencing, they are not yet grasped as being. The reason for this is clear: if being, in its concrete determination, were already known by sensory perception alone, there would be nothing more to come to know. Insight and judgment would be superfluous activities of our human spirit because they would have nothing more to know. The same situation obtains with respect to the level of insight if one ascribes the real knowing of being to the *prima mentis operatio*.

## 2. Consciousness as quality immanent in the acts of cognition

Having indicated the structure of our cognition, we now turn to the characteristic that is immanent in the different moments of cognition: namely, to consciousness. First of all, we maintain, negatively speaking, that this quality is not to be understood as a type of inner vision whereby a person becomes conscious of himself by a kind of looking, the way one comes to know outer things by looking or gazing at them. Let us now positively consider the individual acts that constitute cognition. With respect to every one of them, we must distinguish between act and content: for example, between seeing and color, or between insight and idea. Despite differences of content, we perceive an apparent similarity between seeing and hearing: a similarity that, for instance, does not exist between seeing and growing hair. Because of this similarity, there is not just a number of unrelated acts in the knowing subject, but rather acts which combine to form a single knowing (for example, the knowing of a body as something that at the same time is both audible and visible). In all cases, what is involved are conscious acts.

In this common property is grounded the natural unity of wondering, inquiring, understanding, critical reflection, reflective understanding, judgment, and, over and above that, the unity of choosing, deciding, and acting. Characterizing this activity is the fact that all these acts are conscious. Hence, consciousness is the identity which is immanent in the difference and variety present within the process.<sup>16</sup> Despite this difference and variety of elements present within one's cognitive process and within one's appetitive acting, there is one thing which, on the one hand, is actuated by and through these different elements and which, on the other hand, goes beyond them as the invariable point of reference for these many acts.

The function of consciousness in the entire process of knowing can also be grasped by means of another term (apart from the paired concepts of unity and multiplicity): presence. There is the local presence which is typical of bodies. There is the presence of the object which is typical of the objects of cognitive acts. Finally, still remaining within the field of cognition, we speak of the presence of myself to myself. It is the presence of the subject *ex part subiecti* [from the side of the subject], i.e., not as an apprehended object which, in this case, would be identical to the knowing subject, but the subject as a subject.

As, a moment ago, we noted that no unity of the psychological subject is given without the variety of its acts as well as of its contents, so, now, there can be no third kind of presence without the second kind: there can be no presence of oneself to oneself without an object being present. Conversely, as without referring to unity there can be no meaning in talk about variety, so, also, there can be no presence of the object without the presence of the subject. Briefly stated, there is no

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<sup>16</sup>*Insight XI 4: 1326.*



knowing without consciousness. It makes no sense to speak of unconscious knowing. Hence, it is meaningless to say that a subject without consciousness really sees colors through an unconscious act of seeing. If we now say that the seeing subject is conscious and that it must be conscious in order to be able to see, by this we do not mean that the subject itself also is among the objects which it sees. Rather, we say that the subject is present to itself through the fact of its seeing colored objects. The subject is present to itself by an orientation of one and the same act of seeing, an orientation which is opposed to the orientation that act has to its object and which complements it. We designate this orientation as *ex part subiecti*.

The Thomist principle is well known: *unumquodque cognoscitur secundum quod est actu* [everything is known insofar as it is in act]. This means that the no less effective but hidden premise *unumquodque cognoscitur secundum quod est obiectum* [everything is known insofar as it is an object] must be denied. Being known and being an object are not congruent. In other words, not only objects are known. If, therefore, it is indeed true that *unumquodque cognoscitur secundum quod est actu*, it naturally follows from this that, whenever sense perceptions or intelligent acts occur, an object is known, and whenever the senses or the intellect are in act, knowledge of the subject is also given. The sensually perceptible and the senses however (as well as what is intelligible and the intellect) are in act by one and the same act (we say they are in act through the *species impressa* [impressed species]) and, so too, the subsequent second act. Thus, object and subject are known in and through one and the same act. They are known as complementary elements of the total act of knowing. The sensually perceptible (or what is intelligible or true) is known *ad modum obiecti* [in the way of the object], while the senses (or the understanding) are known *ad modum subiecti* [in the way of the subject], i.e., as the perceiving subject (or, respectively, as the thinking or judging subject).

If consciousness is the presence *ad modum subiecti* given in each psychic act as a component of that act, it becomes comprehensible how the consciousness which accompanies each act will also differ according to the ontological manner of being of each act. Hence, Lonergan distinguishes four levels of consciousness: the empirical, the intellectual, the rational, and the responsible levels; which are to be correlated, respectively, with perception, the *prima mentis operatio* [first mental operation], the *secunda mentis operatio* [second mental operation], and the willing which follows a judgment of value. In this sense, consciousness is not to be merely identified with a pure and simple “realization” of itself. Instead, its meaning refers to a dynamic presence which presents itself in the different performances or activities of the human spirit.

This dynamic presence to oneself begins with feeling, perceiving, or presenting any content: such is empirical consciousness. In and through these acts, the subject is given to itself without having an insight about itself and, *a fortiori*, without arriving at a rational judgment about itself and therefore knowing itself *sub ratione entis* [under the formal aspect of being]. Below, we will deal in greater detail with the fact that this negative element is always given with consciousness. Consciousness is not knowledge of oneself, either *sub ratione intelligibilis* [under the formal aspect of intelligibility] or *sub ratione veri* [under the formal aspect of truth].<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the positive element, the

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<sup>17</sup>Therefore Lonergan says that the *experientia* of which he speaks in the definition of consciousness is a *notitia praevia atque informis* [previous knowledge that is lacking in form]. It is *praevia*, in so far as it is presupposed by any introspective, intellectual effort to investigate ourselves. We cannot arrive at any insight about ourselves, that either belongs to everyday life or to scientific thinking, if we are not already given to ourselves. It is *informis* in so far as the *prima*

givenness of itself to itself, the experiencing of itself by itself through its act, changes according to the nature of the act in question.

As soon as the spirit or mind becomes aware of data (the content of empirical consciousness), it shows itself in what Aristotle named the beginning of all science and of philosophy: in astonishment and wonder and in its expression, which is the question. Here occurs the fundamental jump from the level of sensibility to that of intellectual or spiritual consciousness. We are speaking of intellectual consciousness in a general sense, so that it includes both the specifically intellectual and also the rational and moral consciousness. By this jump, not only is a quantitative enlargement of consciousness reached but, more importantly, a qualitative elevation of consciousness: The spirit reveals itself. It seizes possession of itself as spirit.

We can further our examination of consciousness by considering how it operates on the second level, which we call the level of intelligence. Here the subject reveals itself as an inquirer that wants to understand what things are and why or for what reason they are. Moreover, it wants to define things, i.e., through a *verbum interius* [internal word], of which the external word is an expression which seeks to state the essence of the thing: not like a student who repeats a definition by heart, but like one who can give a definition because he has had an act of understanding. The subject, however, is not content with adding an intelligibility which orders or arranges the data. In addition, it wants to determine if this hypothetical order has a counterpart in the data. The subject is not content with bare theory but wants to determine what is real. Such a consciousness is what we refer to as rational consciousness.

This intensification of consciousness comes to the climax in rational self-consciousness which exists in a subject when a choice and a decision are made. In the activities of rational consciousness, the human spirit seeks and finds the groundedness of the products of its insight, so that they are not only given as thought “beings” but as real “beings” without restriction or external condition. In the process of knowing, the person is also confronted with the being of values which are the object of a possible personal choice, namely, as the goal of our will. Here, a person seeks the groundedness of his own acts, so that he becomes a being (grounded in reality) as prescribed by his internal norms, of which the external word is an expression. For this reason, Lonergan calls the consciousness that goes beyond the bare judgment rational self-consciousness. It is actuated rationality which requires the agreement of doing with knowing.

Having shown the characteristics of the different levels of consciousness, it will not be useless to refer to the unity of consciousness, since these different levels supplement each other to form a natural unity despite their basic differences. This unity is shown in the unity of the object: “what is perceived is the same as what is inquired about; what is inquired about is what is understood; what is understood is what is formulated; what is formulated is what is reflected on; what is reflected on is what is grasped as unconditioned; what is grasped as unconditioned is what is affirmed.”<sup>18</sup> The validity of this demonstration on the basis of the object of our knowing is preceded by the unity of consciousness as a still more fundamental fact. Indeed, speaking about conscious acts is an abstraction since, concretely, consciousness is consciousness of the acting subject. It is the

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*mentis operatio* is not yet carried out, since that alone adds to the data a form, i.e., an intelligible connectedness.

<sup>18</sup>*Insight XI 3: 1325.*

psychological subject that is present to itself, that recognizes itself *sub ratione experti* [under the formal aspect of the experienced], according to its various psychological acts. This is a first datum of consciousness, the absence or distortion of which is so abnormal that, as in schizophrenia, it constitutes one of the major psychological illnesses.

### III. CONSCIOUSNESS AS THE NOTION OF BEING

#### 1. Wonder as the dynamic opening of spirit in performance

Now that we have attended to the data of consciousness and, to some extent, have understood what human consciousness is, we examine the meaning of consciousness for a critical theory of knowledge. After having reached the horizon of being as the *a priori* condition of each question and, thus, of every act of knowing, Coreth asks about the origin of this horizon of being. With our analysis of Lonergan, we believe that now we can give an answer to this question: the origin is situated in intellectual consciousness; indeed, we can say that the horizon of being - this anticipatory knowledge which is *a priori* and unthematized - coincides with intellectual consciousness.

We said that the human person - in contrast with animals - falls into wonder and astonishment on encountering sense experience. It is also possible to imagine a human person who does not wonder and is content to give himself to the biological stream of life through the immediate contents of sense perceptions (as in watching a film). Occasionally, a person even wishes to enter such a dream world in order to escape from all the burdens of life. However, that is not our normal condition. The Humean world of pure sensations presents itself to us as a riddle or mystery which ought to be opened and, with almost statistical regularity, we experience this tension of the spirit which we have referred to as wonder and amazement.

What is this wonder, besides the fact that it presents itself each time in a different manner? It is an event in which the human mind “touches” itself - we said above that consciousness is essentially self-awareness (self-experience). It is the self given to itself, but not in the sense of self-knowledge and self-possession, in this act of questioning and in all other acts of the psychological subject. It is a self given to itself, which precedes every intelligent and rational<sup>19</sup> answer and even every determination and formulation of this wonder provided by an inner word. This experience of amazement and wonder means that we are given to ourselves in our infinity, but only according to a potentiality which strives in a dynamic movement toward the whole. Hence, it is only potential. It is defined by its potentiality. This presence of itself to itself in such a limitless and active potentiality is exactly our pre-knowledge of being. It is our horizon of being, our *intentio entis*

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<sup>19</sup>With these two expressions “intelligent” and “rational,” we refer to spiritual activities, to the *prima* and *secunda mentis operatio*. We have already seen that Lonergan strongly emphasizes the difference and, at the same time, the complementarity of these two components in the entire structure which constitutes human cognition. In English, intelligent and rational respectively correspond to the level of intelligence and the level of reflection, to questions for understanding and questions for reflection. Cf. *Insight IX*: 269-74.

*intendens* [intending intention of being].<sup>20</sup> If one likes, one can speak, with Coreth, of a pre-knowledge of being as a possession. However, we do not have or possess being in the sense of the entirety of the goal that we strive for; if we did, we would have infinite understanding and so be infinite being itself. Nor can we speak of knowledge of a limited, individual goal - a single instance of being such as my performance of questioning - because this limited cannot ground the infinite horizon of being. Rather, this infinite pre-knowing is an operative principle, the presence of the principle of an infinite striving which has its measure from the infinite object of its striving.

Several times, Coreth points out the unlimited range of our questioning. "Is questioning, in principle, fundamentally restricted to a limited range of possibility? This question answers itself in the performance of questioning: if I question whether the possibility of my questioning has limits, then I am already asking whether I can ask questions beyond the possible boundaries of my ability to ask questions. In this question, however, all possible limits to the ability to ask questions are already overstepped. The question transcends all possible boundaries. The ability to pose questions has no limits...the horizon of being able to ask questions at all is therefore the absolutely all-embracing, unlimited horizon."<sup>21</sup> We have already seen that the absoluteness of being is founded upon the unlimitedness of being, the absoluteness of being which we mean in our question "is it so?" and which we achieve or reach when we have arrived at a rational judgment.

Now Lonergan, for his part, does not attach any less weight to the unlimited dynamism which grounds and penetrates all of our cognitive activities. However, although he does not direct his attention to the formulated question, he dedicates himself to examining the background from which each individual question arises and which finds its expression in the question: namely, the pure desire to know. This desire is not the only desire from which human activity derives. Yet, in contrast to every other desire that fights for control of the human heart, it is a pure desire for knowledge, as it exists in itself, a desire rather for the content of knowledge than for any personal satisfaction which a person receives in the act of knowing. In this sense, it is a detached, disinterested desire with an import such that, if a person gives it free rein in his life, his whole life (in its conscious and unconscious dimensions) will be taken up and absorbed by its claims. This desire is characterized by two properties: firstly, its striving is unlimited; and, secondly, it is the opening up of the meaning (= *notio*, which we will soon explain) of what is striven for, the being.

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<sup>20</sup>*De Constitutione Christi* 10ff [*Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* 11ff]. It is interesting to see in St. Thomas that, although in his philosophical reflections he is obviously outside the problematic of the transcendental method, he nevertheless clearly has seen the connection between the dynamic and unlimited orientation of our intellectual spirit and its formal object, being: "*Intellectus autem respicit suum obiectum secundum communem rationem entis, eo quod intellectus possibilis est quo est omnia fieri*" [but the intellect regards its object according to the common aspect of being, since the possible intellect is that which becomes all things]; *Summa Theol.* I Q. 79 A. 7. We would like to say that St. Thomas thinks much more transcendentially and aprioristically than those modern Thomists who do not find any other origin for our notion of being than the data of sense. For them, it is not necessary to look elsewhere for an origin. Naturally, one presupposes a spiritual faculty, the intellect, but all that one can say about this faculty belongs to metaphysics. There are no statements about psychological realities which would belong to a cognitional theory. See B. Lonergan, "Metaphysics as Horizon," *Gregorianum* 44 (1963) 312f, 315 [*Collection*, 195f, 199-201].

<sup>21</sup>*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>113; <sup>1</sup>133f.

## 2. The unlimited dynamic of consciousness and the heuristic definition of being

The unlimitedness of the realm to which our mind turns in seeking knowledge is important both for epistemology and for metaphysics. Every doubt about it comes to nothing but another acknowledgment of the unlimitedness of this pure desire to know. To say that we do not know and will never know certain things is nothing other than an admission that our desire and our questioning not only reach beyond the limit of all previously achieved knowing, but also beyond the limit of all possible answers. If there exists a limit to possible answers, then this means that there is a limit to the fulfillment of our desire for knowledge, so that human understanding finds itself before an unfathomable mystery in which each question is condemned to remain without any sufficient answer. But the dynamic of our understanding has advanced to this point: namely, beyond every limit. Thus our desire, our striving for knowledge, has no limits or boundaries. To doubt, to question, and to speak of what absolutely cannot be known is a contradiction because it presupposes that we are in possession of a “category” which allows us to grasp the unknowable object that is implied by our question. This category is the pure desire to know.

After having emphasized the pure desire to know, Lonergan defines being in terms of this desire: “being is the objective of the pure desire to know.”<sup>22</sup> For us, the only possible insight into the all-embracing reality lies in grasping the connection between being, as all-embracing reality, and our desire for knowledge which, in the same manner, is also all-embracing. The connection consists in the fact that the desire to know is directed toward all of reality so that being coincides with what we seek to know.

From this it becomes evident that Lonergan’s definition of being is grounded in the identification of what is real with what is rational. The entire examination of human cognition in *Insight* does nothing other than point out and reject the manifold ways by which the polymorphism of our consciousness tries to suggest a sense of reality as what we would recognize in advance of our rational judgment, therefore prior to and independently of the last and concluding element in our process of knowing. The unconditionedness of reality is correlative to the unconditionedness of the original question and of the absolute goal reached in judgment. Within the unlimited and therefore absolute sphere that is determined by the desire for knowledge, differentiations between this and that, between me and the other, emerge; a material being emerges as something “out there” and is opposed to other material beings; restrictions of all kinds and types emerge whereby something “is,” but only under a limited and restricted point of view: whether logical, mathematical, hypothetical, phenomenological, etc.<sup>23</sup>

This definition of being can appear both arbitrary and questionable, but it refers to a fact that is unavoidably operative in every human being. To doubt whether being so defined is really being, to look for another and more correct definition, means that the validity of the above definition is being presupposed: being is the actual objective of our desire for knowledge; it is what we recognize in

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<sup>22</sup>*Insight* XII 1: 1348.

<sup>23</sup>*Metaphysics as Horizon* 2191, 1205.

rational judgment. For every person, being is the answer to his question for understanding and his question for reflection.

The epistemological consequences deriving from the psychological analysis of our unlimited pure desire to know are as follows: already, at the beginning, one overcomes every form of immanentism and idealism. Intellectual consciousness, in its dynamic character, is bound by no principle of immanence: "Because the intention is unrestricted, it is not restricted to the immanent content of knowing, to *Bewusstseinsinhalte* [contents of consciousness]; at least, we can ask whether there is anything beyond that, and the mere fact that the question can be asked reveals that the intention which the question manifests is not limited to any principle of immanence. But the answers are *to* questions, so that if questions are transcendent, so also must be the meaning of corresponding answers."<sup>24</sup>

The question about the objectivity of human knowing, about a knowing that overcomes immanentism and relativism, is thus not solved through dogmatically accepting or assuming a reality which is "already out there now"; hence, an irrationally understood reality. Perhaps one will say that affirming such a reality is not dogmatism, but rather belongs to those evidences, which one must assume, since not everything can be proved. What we want to deny here, however, is not the spontaneous evidence which points to an external world, nor the rationality of a statement grounded on such evidence. What we deny is the rationality of that sense of reality which underlies this statement. What we actually know by means of insight and rational reflection in the performance of our *intentio intendens* [intending intention], or - in other words - what we have come to know because we have understood and have rationally affirmed, is interpreted, according to this opinion, as something which was already known in a stage that precedes the act of questioning and reflection. We have come to know it because we have seen or heard it, or have touched it. If such a sensism or materialism is too blatant, then one falls back into an immediate "intellectual" intuition of being in sense data. But this intuition is neither our intelligent understanding nor our rational judgment but something that precedes these two activities of our spirit. Such an intuition seems, however, to be nothing other than a duplication of empiricist, sensist views. To it one resorts if, in place of an exact analysis of human cognition which is possible only by examining the data of our consciousness, one is content with a familiar and obvious analogy grounded in a sense perception.

In complete contrast, our intellectual activities have "their objectivity, not because they resemble ocular vision, but because they are what ocular vision never is, intelligent and rational."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the objectivity of human knowing, i.e., its ability to grasp being in itself and the unconditioned validity of what is known in judgment, is founded upon "an unrestricted intention that intends the transcendent, and a process of self-transcendence which reaches it."<sup>26</sup> A person is capable of transcendence because his process of knowing knows without additional conditions

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<sup>24</sup>*Cognitive Structure* 213, 1236.

<sup>25</sup>*Cognitive Structure* 218, 1240.

<sup>26</sup>*Cognitive Structure* 213, 1236.

coming from the subject. Intelligibility, within an unrestricted horizon of being, is pure transparency. What presents itself within the horizon of being as virtually unconditioned, i.e., as a conditioned whose conditions happen to be fulfilled, is an instance of real being, a thing-in-itself.

Coreth treats this point also in great detail. The unrestrictedness of the horizon to which a question refers as its *a priori* condition shows that “there is never a closed ‘interior’ space of our transcendental subjectivity, since our subjectivity, in its performance, is always already with being in itself in general and this being transcends our subjectivity. The performance is constituted, in its nature and in its possibility, by its horizon. The horizon, however, within which subjectivity carries out its performance, is always already the horizon of being in general, the horizon of being in itself.”<sup>27</sup>

So far, in our transcendental reduction, we have pointed out how the unrestricted dynamism of our cognitive desire is the basis of our intellectual knowing and becomes effective when our spirit, when confronted with sensibly given data, breaks forth into wonder and astonishment. Moreover, we have defined being as the objective of this striving and, by doing this, we have given reality an expressly rational sense which seems to be the most fundamental and most valid intention behind idealism. However, idealism has remained idealism and has fallen into immanence because it has not advanced to identifying reality with the object of our intelligent and rational striving. A study of Kant can show, in a forthright way, the fundamental ambiguity which explains why all subsequent forms of idealism have locked themselves into some form of immanentism.

Kant saw clearly that human knowing cannot be attributed to pure perception since, in human beings, a range of intellectual activities is available which empiricists have underestimated or completely ignored. On the other hand, to him, the meaning of reality peculiar to empiricism and to the uncritical realism that commonsense people take for granted was too obvious to be questioned. The real here is an “already out there now,” known not by intellectual and rational activity, but by a prior activity which rests on the spatial-temporal extroversion proper to acts of sense.<sup>28</sup> The only kind of cognitive performance that can achieve such a knowledge of reality would be a kind based on the pattern of ocular vision; a performance, therefore, that is neither intellectual nor rational.<sup>29</sup> With such a view of the meaning of reality and objectivity, naive realists claim that people quite obviously possess such a faculty of seeing: they associate thinking, more or less, with using one’s eyes and hold that, by looking or seeing, we know reality. Against this position, idealists say that, since they no longer believe in the effectiveness of such an immediate vision, the knowing as the seeing of empiricism only leads to a knowledge of appearances; hence our cognition inevitably moves only within the realm of appearances. However, between these two schools of thought about cognition, there exists only one, though weighty, merely *de facto* difference. Indeed, both views of human cognition are based on the same principle. This common principle is an irrational view of reality whereby there is no immediate relation between knowing and its object, what is real, and therefore no objectivity except through intuition. For this reason,

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<sup>27</sup>*Metaphysik* <sup>2</sup>160, <sup>1</sup>193; see also <sup>2</sup>57, <sup>1</sup>68.

<sup>28</sup>*Insight* XIV 4.3: 414; XV, 4.5: 422.f; XV, 7.5: 482; etc.

<sup>29</sup>*Cognitive Structure* <sup>2</sup>218, <sup>1</sup>240.

for Kant and all subsequent idealists, intellectual activities because they are not related to reality (which is irrational as shown) have their own reality, a reality of appearance.

In contrast, since we have indicated the unrestricted horizon of questioning, we are in a position to point out the rational meaning of reality: reality is the object of acts by which our unrestricted *intentio intendens* is actuated, and so the desire for knowledge turns into actual knowing. Now, in no way does introspective analysis find a kind of activity in our intellectual process of knowing that is akin to the activity of eyes engaged in seeing. Instead, introspective analysis clearly attests to activities that are unlike seeing: activities such as seeking and inquiring, understanding, conceiving, critical reflecting, reflective understanding, and judging. Reality, or being, is therefore all that is grasped by insight and affirmed rationally in judgment.

### 3. The dynamism of intellectual consciousness is the *notio* of being

The second characteristic of the pure desire to know is the fact that it is the *notio* of its goal, i.e., it is the *notio* of being. Here, above all, Lonergan's analysis is able to clarify a point which we find unclear in Coreth. In other words: the sense of wonder that appears when something becomes present to a person is already a knowing of its goal. In what sense? First, because our inquiry consciously directs itself toward the object of its knowing, toward the whole of the knowable. The eye of a fetus, as Lonergan says,<sup>30</sup> is oriented toward seeing. It is a structure that is developed for the purpose of seeing. The fetal eye, however, does not see its future object: body, insofar as it is colored. It possesses no *notio* of its object. Consciousness itself does not suffice, however, for a *notio* of being in the sense we speak of here.<sup>31</sup> A hungry organism strives for food: it "knows" its

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<sup>30</sup>*Insight* XII 3: <sup>1</sup>354f., <sup>2</sup>378f.

<sup>31</sup>With the expression "the *notio* of being" we name a basic element in human knowing which is fundamental in Lonergan's analysis. We have not succeeded in finding a more common expression than this which, without ambiguity, shows what Lonergan refers to as *the Notion of Being* (*Insight* chap. XII), *notio entis* [notion of being], or *intentio entis intendens* [intending intention of being] (*De Constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica* 10ff; *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, 11ff). The meaning, we hope, will become clear from our explanations. We do not use the expression "prior or fore-concept [*Vorbegriff*, in German]," although it is true that the Notion of Being refers to something that is prior to concepts. Modern scholasticism is aware of a pre-conceptual element in our knowing. Lonergan distinguishes between preconceptualism *ex part obiecti*, i.e., the idea, the content of an insight, and preconceptualism *ex part subiecti*. The latter is the Notion of Being whose function is broader and far more extensive than the activity of understanding on the level of intellectual consciousness, which utters the *verbum interius* on the basis of an insight. This *notio* of being corresponds to Coreth's pure pre-knowledge of being but with the greater clarity and depth that Lonergan's analysis is able to show. Therefore, it seems to us that the translation of Otto Muck (*loc. cit.* 0. 252) is somewhat misleading when it renders "Notion of Being" as "Concept of Being" [*Seinsbegriff* in German]. It is misleading if one does not sufficiently emphasize the fact that this concept, in contrast with every other human concept, is not the fruit of an insight into data. It is true that Lonergan, in an early article on Aquinas's understanding of human cognition (*The Concept of Verbum in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas I: Theological Studies* 7 [1946] 390f; *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 57f), used the expression "concept of Being." Nevertheless, his description already clarifies unequivocally the fundamental difference between the concept of Being and other concepts. In Chapter XII of *Insight*, this difference was worked out further when Lonergan decided that it was necessary for him to make a clear linguistic distinction between notion and concept.



hunger. This consciousness of its own desire for food is still not a *notio* of food because such a consciousness includes nothing which has to do with understanding or rational judgment. Moreover, each human action that follows a choice is a conscious striving for something. It is consciousness in its highest development. However, knowledge of the object, which is given together with the action is not to be attributed to the act of willing but to the preceding judgment of value. Our pure desire for knowledge, however, is explicitly and rationally conscious of itself and is therefore itself a *notio* of its goal.

Let us try to specify this basic point more accurately. We have already said that consciousness means knowledge of itself *ex part subiecti*. It is not a knowing of oneself as an object of cognitive acts, but a knowing of oneself as the principle of these acts. We also said that consciousness, although it is to be always and only understood as experience, unfolds and develops itself according to the ontological perfection of the psychic acts which are being engaged in. Actually, one must say that the ontological differences within consciousness itself decide the ontological differences pertaining to acts. What degree of ontological perfection does the human spirit reveal to itself in its experience of wonder and astonishment? The highest ontological degree: spirit reveals itself as spirit; it experiences itself as spirit. Spirit means unlimitedness; hence, it implies absoluteness and self-luminousness. Where, on the one hand, a part of reality can be given to another so that it does not fully possess itself, on the other hand, what is all can be fully possessed only by itself. It is luminous to itself. It possesses itself through that possessing which we call intelligibility. It is intelligible to itself. What is all is also absolute. Beyond it, there is no other reality which can question it by differently representing its validity. The unlimitedness of our spirit, however, is only potential: *potens omnia facere et fieri* [able to make and become all things]. Therefore, spirit is not the luminousness of what it is already. Rather, it is the luminousness of what it grasps as it anticipates being in its empty totality. It is absoluteness not in terms of what it is in itself but in terms of being for which it dynamically strives.

What does all this mean for our inquiry? The wonder and astonishment that the human spirit falls into, as soon as it becomes in act on the empirical level, takes concrete form in the questions: “*quid sit* ? [what is it?]” and “*an sit*? [is it? is it so?]”. Coreth asks from where does it come that we ask ourselves these questions and that they have meaning for us? From where does our pure pre-knowledge of being come since every question, in the end, is a question about being? The answer to this question seems clear to us: this knowledge belongs to the spirit as such; it is completely *a priori*. A question, whatever it may be, is exactly this pure pre-knowledge of which Coreth speaks. It is the *notio* Lonergan speaks about applied to concrete data. The pure pre-knowledge, however, the *notio* of being, is completely *a priori*. It is spirit as spirit. We do not have to look for any other source of this knowledge.

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Finally, in the newer French translation of his study of *Verbum* in Aquinas where he speaks of the *concept d' être*, he has added a note which says that, with respect to being, he would now make the following distinctions: 1. *notion*, 2. *concept implicite*, 3. *connaissance*, 4. *idée* and 5. *théorie d'être*. Accordingly, the pre-knowledge of being is the notion of being, whereas every concept is a *concept implicite d'être* [implicit concept of being], since it is formed for the purpose of judging. i.e., knowing being *sub ratione entis* [in terms of being]. (*La Notion de verb dans les Ecrits de Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Archives de Philosophie* 26 [1963] 202 annotation 196).

The statement that the spirit is the luminousness of what it anticipates means that the question “*quid sit?*” is nothing the subject could have gathered from an object *a posteriori*, not even from an object that would be given in the spirit’s knowledge of itself as a result of its asking questions. The same applies to the reflective question “*an sit?*”. The human spirit can understand the meaning of this question and can therefore ask whether a thing is, not because it already knows about the existence of a thing, not even because it knows its own existence in the performance of questioning, as Coreth seems to affirm. The question about being and, therefore, the question about the absolute, is something that the spirit can pose because the spirit, in its unrestricted openness, is itself already the *notio* of the absolute. If one is not *a priori* in possession of this *notio*, then no data exist that can mediate this meaning to one. No teacher exists who would be able to produce this understanding for another, for a would-be student. One can ask about this or that single being and, with the help of data - *a posteriori* therefore - one can understand and know it. But, about being in general, about being as the meaning of being in general, one cannot ask because it is the prior condition of every possible question.<sup>32</sup>

In consciousness, we have the most actual and the purest element of knowing. It is true that our knowing, because of its potentiality, strives beyond its self-identity in so far as our cognition is actuated by a form that differs from ourselves. Nevertheless, it remains that knowing in its origin - the origin in which knowing has its ground and toward which it strives in an unrestricted ascent - is an identity of being with itself. Now, in consciousness on the intellectual level, there is a unity of knowing and being. It belongs to spirit not to be dispersed over time and space but to penetrate itself completely in self-possession. The spirit resembles a luminous point in which being itself is directly illuminated or revealed. An other, an object, is known when it enters the field of this light.

The knowing of being which intellectual consciousness consists of - what we have named knowing *ex parte subiecti* - can also be expressed figuratively in terms of obverse and reverse. To this purpose, Lonergan falls back on what a person knows better than anything else: the products of his own work. With respect to them, one can distinguish between an intelligent plan and the product based on it. “Before the plan is realized in things, it was invented by intelligence; before the sequence of productive operations was undertaken, it was affirmed as worth while for some sufficient or apparently sufficient reason. In the thing there is the intelligible design, but in the inventor there was not only the intelligibility on the side of the object but also intelligent consciousness on the side of the subject. In the thing there is the groundedness that consists in its existence being accounted for by a sequence of operations, but in the entrepreneur there was not only the groundedness of his judgment in the reasons that led to it, but also the rational

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<sup>32</sup>Lonergan would subscribe to the following considerations voiced by Coreth: “knowledge about being and the meaning of being can never be obtained or explained from other things that confront me as questionable and knowable. Asking about an other in terms of what “is” and a knowledge of an other in terms of what “is” always presupposes a prior knowledge of being, or, to use Heidegger’s word: a ‘prior understanding of being’ [in German, ‘vorgängiges Seinsverständnis’]” (*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>136, <sup>1</sup>163). However, we think that without the more exact determinations and definitions we have made in the course of our work, Lonergan would not assent to Coreth’s conclusion that this pre-knowledge of being “is based on the immediate experience of being and on the immediate certainty of its own performance” (*ibid*). The performance that Coreth relies on seems to abandon transcendental subjectivity on whose basis alone being can be defined, since the human subject, as the psychological subject, is the locus for the revealing of being. “Knowing is the intrinsic subjectivity of being itself”: Cf. K. Rahner, *Geist in Welt*, München<sup>2</sup> 1957, 81-84 [*Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych, New York 1968, 67-71].

consciousness that required reasons to reach judgment. [Therefore] intelligence and intelligibility are the obverse and reverse of the second level of knowing: intelligence looks for intelligible patterns in presentations and representations...In like manner, reasonableness and groundedness are the obverse and reverse of the third level of knowing. Reasonableness is reflection inasmuch as it seeks groundedness for objects of thought...In man's artifacts there are the reverse elements of the intelligibility and groundedness, but there are not the obverse elements of intelligence and reasonableness. The obverse elements pertain to cognitional process on its second and third levels; they do not pertain to the contents emergent on those levels, to the idea or concept, to the unconditioned or affirmed; on the contrary, they characterize the acts with which those contents are coupled, and so they are specific differentiations of the awareness of consciousness. Clear and distinct conception not only reveals the intelligibility of the object but also manifests the intelligence of the subject. Exact and balanced judgments not only affirm things as they are but also testifies to the dominance of reasonableness in the subject."<sup>33</sup>

From this analysis it becomes clear what it means to say that we come to a grasp of intelligent, rational consciousness; this refers not simply to our insight and rationality, but to the operational characteristics of the cognitive process. These find their expression in the wonder that emerges with respect to data, in the inner tension that ends only when the data reveal, even if only hypothetically, the secret of their intelligibility, an intelligibility on the basis of which I can grasp those unities and intelligible relations which, through a process of slow advance and reciprocal completion, explain a whole range of data. Finally, these operational characteristics and properties of consciousness find their expression in our dissatisfaction with theories however brilliant they may be as long as they are not verified in the data themselves. These features show that the subject seizes possession more and more of its own abilities. In a word: the *notio* of being is the operative intelligible.

All of this clearly indicates that consciousness, when implemented on the intellectual level, is to be equated with the horizon of being. Asking from where the subject knows Being and the meaning of Being is therefore not necessary. Initial wonder in its unrestrictedness means exactly a searching for that which has the luminosity and the unconditionedness which are characteristic of being. Now this searching, which is conscious of such a luminosity and absoluteness, is itself the *notio* of its own object. *Notio* here refers to a certain type and manner of knowing that is not identical with an actual knowledge about something (which we have in judgment), nor with thinking about something (which we have in a term or concept that emerges as the conclusion of the *prima mentis operatio*). Rather, it refers to a previous, all embracing anticipatory knowledge. This pre-knowledge makes it possible for us human beings not only to think thoughts and to affirm judgments, like a computer which is busy in performing its calculations (but, differently from men, it is not able to find itself in them). This pre-knowledge also makes it possible for us to think and judge in such a way that in the consciousness that we have of ourselves, we find the norms according to which we know the being that we are seeking. This means that in reference to ourselves, we have the luminosity that allows us to detect and recognize an intelligible pattern in data, and we have the absoluteness that enables us to know that we have arrived at a degree of unconditionedness and absoluteness that absolutely excludes its opposite, i.e., to recognize when we have reached being.

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<sup>33</sup>*Insight XI 2: 1322f., 2347.*

4. The dialectic between performance and concept as the dialectic between the *notio* of being and the phases of knowing *ex parte obiecti*

Coreth develops his entire metaphysics on the basis of the dialectic between concept and performance, i.e., “between conceptually expressed, thematically articulated knowledge and unexpressed, pre-conceptual knowledge which is unthematically given in the performance.”<sup>34</sup> This unthematized knowledge of being, implicit in the performance of questioning, is of such abundance and fullness that in the movement of our spirit to reach being as other, the still unknown being can never be thematized or fully articulated. Now, we are convinced that the *notio* of being, about which Lonergan speaks when speaking of knowing *ex parte subiecti*, and which coincides with *notitia sui* [knowledge of itself] - the *notitia sui* which the human spirit has actuated on the intellectual level - not only determines and clears up what Coreth names knowledge of the performance, but also better brings out the two poles of the dialectic.

According to Coreth, there is the knowledge of performance as one pole and the concept as the other. According to Lonergan, as one pole we have the *intentio entis intendens* [intending intention of being] and, as the other, the entire process of knowing in its different phases: from the formulated question for understanding to inquiry, to the insight, to the concept, to the question for reflection, to the critical reflection, to grasping the virtually unconditioned as constituting necessary and sufficient evidence, and, finally, to rational judgments in which *tamquam in medio ens cognoscitur* [as in a medium we know a being]. An individual judgment, however, only realizes a fraction of our desire for knowledge of concrete reality in all its fullness. Every judgment is, at the same time, a starting point for new questions in an ongoing process that never ends.

Therefore, the second pole of the dialectical movement is not concerned only with the concept, as if such a restricted focus truly would represent the sum total of thematized knowing in contrast to the unthematized knowledge of performance. Rather, and in addition, this pole encompasses all phases of the knowing process in which the *intentio intendens* realizes itself, passing from an anticipatory knowledge *ex parte subiecti* to an actual knowledge *ex parte obiecti*. Obviously, the concept has an important role to play within this process, since it specifies what we know. Experience alone is not able to specify what we know, but only presents materials for our knowing. In a similar manner, judgment approves or negates what has already been specified.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the concept is not the final point or stage: in reaching a concept one has not yet advanced to actual human knowing which seeks knowledge about being, about what is.

Further, we can see how Lonergan understands the quest for being which constitutes the second pole of the dialectic: the entire dialectical movement of articulation and thematization has nothing to do with deduction. We do not want to assume on Coreth's part that his systematic development of metaphysics, through his transcendental method, is nothing but some kind of *a priori* deduction. He refers expressly to the necessity of returning to experience again and again. Hence, he emphasizes two movements in transcendental method that are peculiar to metaphysical inquiry: a reductive way that moves from the immediate realities of consciousness to the conditions implied therein; and a deductive way which, going out from the *Prius* [former, first] that is already grasped in the reduction, wants to bring out the natural structures of the performance that are derivable from

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<sup>34</sup>*Metaphysik* 288f; 103. See also 269; 82.

<sup>35</sup>*Insight* XV 1:1432

such a *Prius* as the prior condition of performance.<sup>36</sup> “Now, through the use of both elements one ensures that transcendental thinking falls back again and again on the concrete, on the real as concrete, and, as such, on directly experienced performance. From it, it has to proceed and to it, it has to return. By it, it is rooted in being.”<sup>37</sup>

Despite what has been written, it is not clear to us what Coreth thinks about the fullness of knowing which is involved in the performance, and which our reflection can never exhaustively put into concepts, and it is not clear to us in what sense the content of every new concept is to be derived from the performance of questioning and its continuation.<sup>38</sup> In contrast to this, the *notio* of being described by Lonergan unequivocally indicates that the *a priori* of our spirit, in which the whole of our knowing is grounded, includes no content from which we could derive our knowing by expressing what our spirit always already possesses. This *a priori* is pure anticipation. It is pure movement toward the whole of everything, complete poverty. However, it is in its understanding and rationality already a *notio* of its object. This total emptiness is not that of a box, nor that of an empty stomach, but an emptiness of spirit which, in its self-presence or self-possession as active potency for the whole, anticipates and so knows the whole that is sought: being. As Coreth himself says: “knowledge about being in its wholeness is thus not a full, all embracing, possessed knowledge, but an empty, anticipatory, outlining knowledge, not knowledge as possessing the known but pre-knowledge as an outline of what can be known.”<sup>39</sup> We now hold with Lonergan that such is the case for our *a priori* knowledge. It is not necessary to look for its foundation in a pre-knowledge (it must be a previous knowledge, if it has to be the origin and foundation) as it seems to be for Coreth. Such an origin would have to be a) nothing other than a finite “partial knowledge,” and, in fact, b) something that we would have independently of and before the horizon of being and that came before that horizon.”<sup>40</sup>

## 5. The dynamism of intellectual consciousness and first principles

The apriority that we have found in the *notio* of being also applies to the first principles of human knowing, since these are nothing but the immanent norms of our *notio* of being. The statement that these first principles are *a priori* means that they are not *verba interiora* [internal or inner words] which express insights into sensible data. Instead, they are inner laws which, *ab intrinseco* [from

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<sup>36</sup>*Metaphysik* 260f; 172.

<sup>37</sup>*Metaphysik* 271; 184f.

<sup>38</sup>*Metaphysik* 289; 1104.

<sup>39</sup>*Metaphysik* 2135; 1162.

<sup>40</sup>If one considers how Lonergan understands the *notio* of being, then the horizon of being plainly appears as something ultimate, which cannot be attributed to anything else that is prior to it. Perhaps, however, one can deepen one’s contemplation of this *notio* as the *a priori* of our spirit and thereby accentuate an element that is prior to the horizon of being formally as horizon. We will attempt to take this direction in section IV 2 of this study. Therefore all assertions, which we make about the horizon of being as ultimate, must be understood in such a way that it does not contradict future speculations.

the inside], determine the process of knowing. They are not judgments which one might learn in a study of logic or some other instruction and from which every other judgment would follow. Rather, these laws are the very reality of the human subject in so far as it is intelligent and rational. They are the concrete subject itself not only from an ontological perspective but also from a psychological viewpoint – better, they represent the correct view of the spirit since it is a meaningful reality to itself. The intelligent and rational subject means nothing other than being in its luminosity. The reason is that the spirit belongs to a kind that, if it is not already the totality, it is at least the capacity for this totality, i.e., the capacity for being. The first principles are the luminosity of our understanding and the groundedness of our judgments received from the obverse. They are that by which, according to its norms, we can make individual judgments. We can even say that the first principles not only appear on the level of rational consciousness but also already appear on the level of intellectual consciousness in so far as, according to our nature, we can put every insight into a concept in order to arrive at judgment and, thus, at a knowledge of being.

We can summarize the apriority of the first principles in Lonergan's own words as follows: "The pure desire to know, whose objective is being, is the source not only of the answers but also their criteria, and not only of questions but also of the grounds on which they are screened. For it is intelligent inquiry and reasonable reflection that just as much yield the right questions as the right answers."<sup>41</sup> It is I, who, as an intelligent subject, in my original wonder and astonishment; it is I who has the urge for being, in fact, for a being which excludes non-being. Another, less absolute being, if there were such a thing *per absurdum* [by an absurd assumption], does not interest me. It is not the being for which I strive.

As experience is not the origin of our *notio* of being, so is experience not the origin of first principles. The function of experience within human knowing is limited to the pure presentation of data upon which our astonishment and wonder can throw its light, formulating itself in a particular question for understanding. On the next level of critical reflection, experience supplies that material evidence for critical reflection, which allows our thinking of a being to move to a rational affirmation of the same, i.e., from a knowledge of possibility to a knowledge of actuality, actuality of being.<sup>42</sup>

Because of the *a priori* character of the *notio* of being and its inner norms, the first principles, Lonergan speaks about an autonomy that distinguishes the entire process of knowing. This autonomy is an autonomy of spirit, in its intelligent, rational, and moral activity, in so far as the spirit, in its performance, is determined by transcendental laws. "Transcendental" is the scholastic sense refers to being and its attributes, in so far as they belong to all being. In a similar manner, the laws by which spirit is active are transcendental. In contrast to the limited laws of empirical consciousness, the laws of the spirit are laws that explain why the human spirit is not closed, restricted, and, as it were, bound in its cognitive and appetitive activities, to any one part of reality. Rather, the human spirit is open to the whole of being and so to the whole of what is true and good. The actual norm which intellect must follow in its knowing is not taken from outside, but is the

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<sup>41</sup>*Insight* XII 2: <sup>1</sup>352; <sup>2</sup>376.

<sup>42</sup>B. Lonergan, *The Concept of Verbum in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas I: Theological Studies* 7 (1946) 390; *Archives de Philosophie* 26 (1963) 202. [*Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 57-8]

presence of intellect to itself. This autonomy is effective in all areas to which the spirit turns, and, most especially in the existential domain where the person “*de se ipso quaerit, et qualis esse debeat intelligit, et quemadmodum ipse se talem facere possit iudicat, unde procedit electio existentialis per quam, quatenus hic et nunc in se est, ipse se talem facit* [asks about oneself, understands what kind of person one ought to be, judges how one can make oneself that kind of person, and from all of this there proceeds an existential choice through which, insofar as one is able here and now to do so, one makes oneself to be that kind of person].”<sup>43</sup>

## 6. Knowledge of performance as the origin of the horizon of being

We hope that we have made sufficiently clear how the horizon of being in the sense of Lonergan’s *notio* of being is the *apriori simpliciter* [simply] of our spirit and how no additional question originates within such a view about the origin of this horizon. It itself is, both in its dynamism and in its absoluteness, the ultimate source of our knowing. Despite the ambiguity in Coreth’s formulation of the question, we continue to follow Coreth a bit further because, with his formulation of the question, we can more precisely determine the function of consciousness as the ground of human knowing.

After Coreth has reached our pre-knowledge of being as our anticipatory knowledge of everything that can be questioned, he argues as follows: “Knowledge about being in its wholeness is thus not a full, all embracing, possessed knowledge, but an empty, anticipatory, outlining knowledge. It is not a knowledge as possessing the known, but a pre-knowledge as an outline of what can be known. Such a foreknowledge, however, demands an origin of the outline. This origin must itself be a knowledge; in fact, a knowledge about being from which I can know about being in general and the meaning of being in general; a knowledge from which, therefore, I can draft an outline of the horizon of being as a pre-knowledge. If it is to be the origin of an outline of being, however, then it cannot only be a pre-knowledge as an outline of all which is knowable, but it must be a *knowledge* which possesses the known, the known namely as something that “is”, that is located in being and that can illuminate the meaning of being in general. Such, in fact, is the knowledge of performance. By engaging in the performance of my questioning, *I know immediately about it* as a truly existing performance. I know that I ask; *I know* that I am inquiring and *am in the performance of questioning*; I know that I am engaging in the performance of questioning. I know that the performance of my questioning “is,” that it is implementing itself as being. In the performance of questioning and knowing, a being is given which immediately coincides with knowledge. The performance knows itself as being. Being knows itself as performance. The knowledge posits itself as being and being implements itself as knowledge - in the immediate *unity of being and knowledge in the performance*.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>B. Lonergan, *De Deo Trino II. Pars Systematica. Romae* 1964, 90f. [The author cites a text which now appears in both Latin and English in a recently published translation of Lonergan’s earlier Latin work which is now cited as *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran & H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 178-179.]

<sup>44</sup>*Metaphysik* <sup>2</sup>135f; <sup>1</sup>162f. Italic emphasis provided by the author except for the last one which is found in Coreth’s text.

What, more precisely, is this knowledge of performance? Two possible interpretations of the genitive in “Vollzugswissen” [knowledge of performance] present themselves. The first refers to the objective genitive. The performance is the object of knowing. It is a performance that is grasped by knowledge as an object. The person who poses questions (or who thinks, judges, or who, in fact, performs any act of knowing) knows about its own performance. In this sense, it seems, the above quoted text must be understood. At least, several statements suggest as much in this text. The second interpretation refers to a subjective genitive. The genitive specifies the performance as knowing:<sup>45</sup> *cognitio ex parte subiecti* [knowing on the side of the subject], as we would say with Lonergan.

In an article written by Coreth, published in English in a commemorative volume celebrating Lonergan’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, the translator draws our attention to the fact that he has translated and so has interpreted *Vollzugswissen* as “knowing implicit in performance” or as “knowing concomitant in performance.”<sup>46</sup> This refers rather obviously to the subjective genitive. We find the same meaning where Coreth speaks about knowledge that is included in every performance as unthematized knowledge: “Whatever the content of our knowing may be, there is, as antecedent condition of its possibility, a fundamental knowing occurring in concomitance, not a thematic or objective knowing, but still a knowing that is simultaneous with the occurrence of thematic, objective knowing . . . this fundamental knowing is a knowing about Being [*das Sein*] as condition of all particular knowing about beings [*das Seiende*].”<sup>47</sup> And a little further on he says: “In every act of questioning, of thinking or of knowing, a primary immediate knowing of Being is *included* and is *concomitant* with the performance (*mitvollzogen*) as a condition of the possibility of all particular knowing of beings.”<sup>48</sup>

It seems to us that the ambiguity present in Coreth essentially consists in the following point: on the one hand, he regards the horizon of being as an ultimate which grounds both questioning and knowing; but, on the other hand, he wants to ground further this horizon within the perspective of a critical theory of knowledge.<sup>49</sup> It seems thus that he looks for something that is prior to the horizon and differs from it. The horizon itself would therefore no longer be the actual *a priori* of our knowing. From an ontological point of view, one must say indeed that the spirit cannot be present to itself and reveal itself to itself as spirit unless certain conditions are fulfilled, first of all the presence of a sensually perceptible thing and, therefore, the actuation of spirit on the level of

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<sup>45</sup>In what sense knowing can be spoken about here, and of what it is as a knowing, remains still to be more exactly determined.

<sup>46</sup>F. Coreth, *Dialectic of Performance and Concept: Spirit as Inquiry*, Chicago 1964, 147, Ann. 2.

<sup>47</sup>Coreth, *Dialectic of Performance and Concept: Spirit as Inquiry*, 151. Italic emphasis provided by the author.

<sup>48</sup>Coreth, *Dialectic of Performance and Concept: Spirit as Inquiry*, 151. Italic emphasis provided by the author except for the last one which is found in Coreth’s text.

<sup>49</sup>To try and find an *ontological* basis for the horizon of being, we admit, is nothing to object to.



empirical consciousness. From the point of view of intellectual cognition, however, wonder and astonishment is first: from that point on, we know the sense and meaning of being. More exactly, wonder itself is our unthematized anticipation of being. Our *intentio intendens*, which is present and effective in every phase of the knowing process, as it goes beyond the level of the senses is the intellectual consciousness. It works and gradually unfolds itself. It is the meaning of being or pre-knowledge about being that is present in each phase of knowing as knowing *ex parte subiecti*. It is the inner and effective norm which is continually forming the process of knowing *ex parte obiecti*.

In our opinion, the ambiguity lies here. When Coreth says: "From the immediate experience of being and the certainty of its performance, I know about the being of performance and, *from it*, I know about being or the meaning of being in general,"<sup>50</sup> it seems that he is referring to a performance of the knowing process which has already gone beyond the empirical level. He thinks quite concretely about the performance which is the posing of a question, (*a fortiori*, the same would also hold for the other performances within the process of knowing). In this performance of knowing is given an immediate experience and certainty of being: I know myself as being (even if I know this in an unthematic way). *From this knowledge*, one moves to the horizon of being. One of the motives which inclines us to believe that Coreth ultimately attributes the status of an object to the knowledge of performance is the principle which urges him to get to the knowledge of performance as grounding the horizon of being. For he opposes the knowledge of the horizon of being--the prior knowledge outlining what is to be known--to this other knowledge (the knowledge of performance) which is knowledge possessing the known;<sup>51</sup> hence, he opposes a pure anticipatory knowledge (*cognitio ex parte subiecti*: the subject that--in the luminousness of itself--is pre-knowledge, *notio* of its object) to an actually possessed knowledge which, therefore, is to be understood as a knowledge *ex parte obiecti*. Such an object cannot, of course, represent the totality of being, but is only one part of reality. It is just the object which I know as I recognize myself in the performance of questioning. If Coreth does not understand the knowledge of performance as an objective genitive, in what sense does he then refer to this knowledge as not simply anticipatory (as that knowledge obviously is which forms the horizon of being) but as a knowledge possessing a known? A more exact specification is necessary, but we cannot find it in Coreth.

From Lonergan's analysis we would like to say: each performance of our knowing process, also an individual question, relies on the actuation of our horizon of being and follows from it. This, again, is not due to any particular performance of ours, but occurs as soon as empirical consciousness is overtaken. The spirit reveals itself to itself as an active power, able to direct its unlimited striving toward sensibly given data. The experience of wonder therefore is not exactly identical with the question; it is something prior to it (a priority that is not to be understood in temporal terms). It is the breaking forth of thrust which testifies to the existence and work of the spirit as spirit. It is true that the "*ex parte subiecti*" and, with it, our *notio* of being is not given to us without knowledge *ex parte obiecti*. It thus occurs together with a question, with inquiry, with understanding, etc. However, there is a priority of the first before the second. The first, precisely because it is empty, purely anticipatory, and purely dynamic, actuates itself in questioning and in each subsequent

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<sup>50</sup>*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>137; <sup>1</sup>164. Italic emphasis provided by the author.

<sup>51</sup>*Metaphysik*, <sup>2</sup>136; <sup>1</sup>162.

phase of the knowing process. For this reason, it does not seem right to say: “From the immediate experience of being and the certainty of performance, I know about the being of performance and I know from it Being or the meaning of Being in general,”<sup>52</sup> since there is no performance without this sense of being, and because the performance (questioning, subsequent acts, judgment) posits itself exactly as the performance of this sense or meaning of being; the sense or meaning of being must implement itself in the different acts, since it emerges only as an *intentio* of being.

The priority of the original and pure wonder of concrete questions also remains in every achievement of knowing, be it knowing *sub ratione intelligibilis* [under the formal aspect of intelligibility] or knowing *sub ratione veri et entis* [under the formal aspect of the true and being]. The intelligible is intelligible only for a consciousness which is, in itself, the meaning of the intelligible. The true is true and being only for a consciousness which is, in itself, the meaning of unconditionedness, of truth and being.

#### 7. The absolute validity of the horizon of being is grounded in its unlimitedness and not in the experience of being

Just as a consequence of the ambiguity present in paragraph thirteen, Coreth himself reasserts the same critical objection in the addendum placed in brackets at the end of paragraph thirteen. Is the horizon of being of our questioning and knowing a horizon of unconditional and absolute validity, the horizon of being in itself? Or, is it perhaps only a horizon possessing relative validity, a validity that is only for us, so that we do not reach the thing in itself but only appearances, though we regard these appearances as being in itself, given the necessity of our nature? This is the basic objection that separates critical realism from every form of naive realism, whether uncritical, phenomenalist, or idealist.

To this question, Lonergan would answer that, for him, true being, the real, the being in itself in its unconditional validity, is nothing beyond the object of our pure desire to know. It is that which is anticipated by and through our intelligence and rationality which determine the horizon of being. If someone were to accuse him of arbitrariness, his response would quite simply be that, as a person who knows with his head and not merely with hands and eyes, he rejects every irrational definition of the real. He would have it that it is easy to prove that every objection that is not made *apertis verbis* [with open words] in the name of stupidity employs the criterion of reality which Lonergan comes to in his heuristic definition of being as intrinsically intelligible.

Coreth at first gives Lonergan’s answer, though he does not expressly speak of the intrinsic intelligibility of reality: “Strictly speaking, this question can no longer be put. The reason is that it has already been proved that the possibility of questioning cannot be suppressed, given that we can ask questions beyond every possible questioning; the horizon of questioning is absolutely unlimited... Therefore, there can exist no other, further region or dimension which exceeds the horizon of my questioning and knowledge and which abolishes its absolute validity and which reduces the absolute validity of this horizon to a relative validity - ‘for me’ and not ‘in itself.’”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>*Metaphysik*, 2137; 1164.

<sup>53</sup>*Metaphysik*, 2137f; 1164f.

Afterwards, however, he says - strangely enough - that he wants to respond expressly to this objection. However, this response, in our judgment, includes an error: instead of focusing on the intrinsic intelligibility of reality - maybe under another aspect - it falls back into intuitive realism, i.e., it implies an irrational conception of being: being as something known prior to and independently of our acts of understanding and judging.<sup>54</sup> That such a being would be conceived as “already in here now” instead of “already out there now,” exchanging extroversion for introversion, does not make a great difference.

Indeed, Coreth answers the objection against the absolute validity of the horizon of being by pointing out that, at least in one case, being in itself is directly and undoubtedly given to us; and, as a result, the horizon of being as it exists in itself is secured. “I could never encounter a single being in the absolute and non-rescindable validity of its 'existence,' if I could know it only in a limited and, therefore, still a basically surmountable and surpassable horizon.”<sup>55</sup> “Now, however, we have been given in immediate self-consciousness – even if only in the active performance of 'I ask,' 'I know,' 'I want,' etc – as being in itself in our self-performance, being which is directly given in unquestionable certainty. If I wanted to question it, then I would again find myself as the one who questions and who, by that questioning, knows that he questions and that he posits himself as questioning and inquiring. I cannot escape from the self-certainty of my questioning, but again and always I posit the undoubted *certainty of my questioning performance*. Here occurs the originally immediate being by itself of spirit. In it lies an immediate experience and certainty of being in itself which has an absolute, non-rescindable validity.”<sup>56</sup>

It seems to be rather clear that, for Coreth, this being in itself which is given to us beyond any doubt is my being which I am *hic et nunc* [here and now] in the performance of questioning (or in any other psychological act that exists beyond the purely sensory level of consciousness). It is the being in itself of the psychological subject in its performance that we are immediately and undoubtedly certain of. From here there is an easy transition to the conclusion that the horizon of being is a horizon of absolute validity and the horizon of being in itself.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Now that we have pointed out the impasse to which Coreth’s thought leads (at least, under a plausible interpretation) and have come to the conclusion here proposed, we note with interest that H. Holz, in a new work about Transcendental Thomism (which for the most part deals with Maréchal) expresses a similar reservation. According to Holz, appealing to the experience of being and the certainty of our self-consciousness implies returning to an intuitive knowledge as the foundation justifying the absolute validity of our knowing. Thus, here too, says Holz, we find a sharp contrast with the basic conception found in Maréchal: Coreth does not perform a reduction of performance to its transcendental conditions, the unlimited and therefore absolute horizon of being, but, instead adheres to a phenomenological examination of the performance of knowing as conscious. (H. Holz, *Transzendentalphilosophie und Metaphysik*, Mainz 1966, 147. See 121f, 138f, 155, 222-24).

<sup>55</sup>*Metaphysik*, 2138; 1165.

<sup>56</sup>*Metaphysik*. 2138; 1165f. Italic emphasis provided by the author.

<sup>57</sup>In any case, this position does not solve the problem (that interests us here) of giving reasons for the validity of our horizon as the horizon of being in itself, whether, namely, such a

A point, with which we cannot agree, provided that Coreth's thought actually corresponds with our interpretation of it, is the claim that the act by which I know my performance should structurally differ from every other intellectual act, by which I know, for example, that this is a typewriter, this is a person, or this particular historic event has occurred. We believe that one cannot speak so easily about an immediate experience of being even in this privileged case, where the object known through immediate experience is myself as questioning, knowing, or wanting, etc. Without doubt, one can speak of an experience of being. Yet, we hold that such a way of speaking can easily lead to error, namely, to the error of ignoring the psychic data which show that human knowing is a dynamic structure composed of a number of different activities. One could then artificially postulate an intellectual seeing by which our knowing on the level that transcends the senses consists just in this intellectual seeing. We prefer to adhere strictly to Lonergan's analysis, which finds that the first component of our knowing is experiencing, which is to be correlated with that component of the known which is potency, while the correlate of actual being is the act of judgment. In other words: being is never given to us, i.e., our knowing is not related to being through any activity which one can call sense experience or, on the model of this experience, mental or intellectual experience. The relation we have to being is through the unlimited and *a priori intentio* that we have named the *intentio* of being.<sup>58</sup>

In this sense, in his review of Coreth's *Metaphysik*, Lonergan writes undoubtedly emphasizing the most valuable element in Coreth's analysis of human knowing that: "...for Prof. Gilson being or the concept of being is "seen" in the data of sense. But for Fr. Coreth being is what is asked about with respect to the data of sense. So far from being seen in data, being, for Fr. Coreth, is what is intended by going beyond the data. For questioning goes beyond an already known to an unknown that is to be known; for Fr. Coreth, the already known is the datum, and the unknown to be known is being. Again, for Prof. Gilson, our knowledge of being is *a posteriori*: abstract concepts of being and existence are had by abstracting from sense, and to reach the concrete there is added to the abstractions his intellectual vision. But, for Fr. Coreth, being is an *a priori*, i.e., the intention of being in questioning bears no resemblance to sensitive or empirical knowledge. What is perceived, is not unknown, not to be known, but already known. But being as intended is the exact opposite of the object of perception: it is not already known; it is unknown; it is to be known."<sup>59</sup>

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horizon of being follows from the direct, immediate certainty of ourselves in performance or whether it precedes this absolute certainty and thereby makes it possible.

<sup>58</sup>In section IV 2, on consciousness, we will try to highlight an experience of being but in a sense which does not agree completely with Coreth.

<sup>59</sup>*Metaphysics as Horizon* 200-1; 1215-6. In his article *Cognitive Structure*, through a study of naive realism, Lonergan shows how an immediate relation to reality is grounded in the intention of being. This immediate relation of our cognition is therefore not given in the senses, as the empiricist or the sensist would have it, nor is it given through an immediate intuition of being in sense data, i.e., through an intellectual experience of being based on the model of sense experience. As a result, our activities, whether of the senses or of the understanding, refer to reality in the measure and manner in which they are subsumed under the intention of being. See *Spirit as Inquiry* 240 [or *Collection*, 218].

If being is therefore not given but is known by going beyond any given datum (whether a datum of external experience or a datum of internal experience), then being is not an “already out there now” reality that is grasped in sense experience prior to every question for understanding and prior to every rational answer. Moreover, being is also not an “already in here now” reality whereby one passes from extroversion to introversion and, by so doing, adheres to a refined form of empiricism or sensism which also ignores the exclusive function of rational judgment in our knowledge of being.<sup>60</sup>

8. Self-knowledge in the performance of questioning does not differ in its structure from knowledge of the external world

How do I arrive at certainty about myself as an inquirer, a point to which Coreth attaches such great importance? Exactly in the same way I come to every other judgment: namely, by experiencing, by understanding, and by grasping the evidence sufficient for making the rational judgment, namely that I am asking, thinking, knowing, etc. We can indicate the differences between judgments about the external world and judgments about our own performance as a psychic subject<sup>61</sup> under the following four points. These differences, however, do not eliminate the basic claim that also self-knowledge occurs through the performance of our *intentio intendens*, and that being is known by the actuation of this intention in a rational judgment.<sup>62</sup>

First difference: The data underlying the judgment “I ask” and similar judgments are judgments about data pertaining to psychological data and not about the data of the external senses - they refer to the internal experience which accompanies every psychological act and which is constitutive of every such act. This internal experience we have referred to as consciousness. These data provide material for the activity of inquiry, insight, and formulation, whether these activities occur in the sciences or in commonsense reasoning. The first refers to what we have been doing in our philosophical analysis, and also is done in every scientific psychological analysis. The second occurs when we make judgments about ourselves as, for example, “I do not understand anything about mathematics,” “I do not know what I should do,” “On this occasion, I became very annoyed,” etc. Such statements, whether they are explicit and analytic as in the case of philosophical or scientific inquiry or implicit as in the case of commonsense thinking, are alike in that all are hypotheses. To take a position with respect to these hypotheses, i.e., to posit the absolute “yes” of judgment, is the task of the critical reflection which leads to judgment. Therefore, far from having human knowledge about my being as a being, as a person who is asking

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<sup>60</sup>“One might claim that the real is a subdivision in the ‘already out there now’ or, if one pleases, the ‘already in here now.’ On that view, intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, however useful or praiseworthy they may be, necessarily are extrinsic to knowing reality, for extroversion or introversion of consciousness is prior to asking questions and independent of answers to questions.” (*Insight XV 3. 2*:<sup>2</sup>523; <sup>1</sup>499).

<sup>61</sup>These latter judgments are more frequently referred to as “judgments of consciousness.” We can retain this terminology, although in the following paragraphs, we will come to a more exact meaning.

<sup>62</sup>*Insight IX*: <sup>1</sup>274.

or having doubts, etc., on the level of internal experience, we reach such a knowledge not even at the level of an insight or initial act of understanding which can follow after initially posing questions or entertaining doubts on the level of internal experience.

Second difference: The data for judgments of consciousness are always fully given as soon as any psychological activity is carried out. A man can be blind from birth and therefore never have had the data which we refer to as colors and which alone enable him to make judgments like “this lamp is blue!”. Or, still more generally: a person, because of spatio-temporal restrictions on his experience, can be denied a certain sphere of sense experience so that he cannot arrive at a certain range of judgments by a process of knowing whose origin lies within him. Nobody, however, lacks those data of consciousness which constitute the first component of judgments of consciousness. It is possible to make a selection from within the data of sense, but not in such a way that we do not feel, do not perceive, do not imagine anything at all. Not only are the contents of such acts provided to us, but also the consciousness which accompanies and constitutes these acts. The same applies to the acts of insight. We can regret having a mind and can reduce its use to a minimum. However, we cannot completely wipe it out, because any plan we considered for this purpose would reveal how we were still involved in understanding and in other psychological acts. The same applies to critical reflection and judgment: there is a “rationality identical with us [that] demands the absolute, [that] refuses unreserved assent to less than the unconditioned and, when that is attained, imposes upon us a commitment in which we bow to an immanent Anankê.”<sup>63</sup> The only way to avoid the psychological data concerning the intellectual and rational level of consciousness would be for us to reduce ourselves to the condition of animals, through an operation on our own underlying biological reality, so that we have completely suppressed the possibility that wonder (namely, the tension towards that which has been grasped only as a datum) could originate and manifest itself.

Third difference: Because of the simple existence of the psychological acts, the judgment of consciousness which, as it were, summarizes all other acts i.e., the judgment: “I am a knower,”<sup>64</sup> cannot be denied without internal contradiction. Although this judgment is nothing but a judgment of fact, just like concrete judgments about the external world, it has the peculiarity that the negative judgment “I am not a knower” is not possible without internal contradiction. In this sense, judgments of consciousness occupy a special position in the analysis of human knowing. Am I a knower? The answer “yes” is logical because, if I know, then I also know the fact that I know. The answer “no” is illogical because how could I ask the question and answer it if I did not know? No less illogical is the evasive answer “I do not know.” For if I know that I do not know, then I am a knower; and if I do not know that I do not know, I should not answer.”<sup>65</sup> This is how the judgment of self-affirmation differs from every judgment which refers to sense data: in making the latter, I can judge falsely without falling into an internal contradiction.

A fourth and last difference between judgments of consciousness and other types of judgment is as follows. We said above that the first component of judgments of consciousness is consciousness

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<sup>63</sup>*Insight XI 6:*<sup>2</sup>356; <sup>1</sup>331.

<sup>64</sup>By “I am a knower,” i.e., by self-affirmation and thus by my knowledge of myself as a knower, Lonergan means that I am a “unity-identity-whole” which is determined through the following acts: feeling, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping of the unconditioned and asserting. (*Insight XI:*<sup>2</sup>343-4; <sup>1</sup>319).

<sup>65</sup>*Insight XI 6:*<sup>2</sup>353; <sup>1</sup>329.

itself. If we now consider the data of consciousness on the intellectual level, i.e., the experience of ourselves in and through these acts, then not only are the acts given to us and, with these acts, their corresponding contents *ex parte obiecti*,<sup>66</sup> but we are also given to ourselves in the original act of wonder and in all the activities which occur through the different phases of knowing, i.e., we are given to ourselves as spirit which, as such, strives for being and which thus possesses the *notio* of being. The meaning of being reveals itself to us inevitably because it is immanent in every single act. Although consciousness now means experience in the strict sense of the word, one can speak neither of the experience of being nor of the certainty of being in the sense that Coreth seems to do.

One cannot speak of the experience of being if, by experience, one understands what we have emphasized as the first component of human knowing which is finite in all its performances, and if one gives the sense of objective genitive to “experience of being”, like when we speak, for example, of the experience of colors. The being grasped by the intellectual consciousness as *notio* is not an actual, objective content, but only the object as desired and sought, which is known in the unlimited intellectual and rational anticipation that is the human subject in its act of wondering and in all its subsequent acts.

Still less can one speak of the certainty of being, because certainty is a quality of rational judgment. Here, however, we are still in a phase that precedes judgment. Whereas the act we are considering here belongs either to the *prima* or to the *secunda mentis operatio*, the *notio* of being that is given in and with this intellectual level of activity is not the object of an insight or a judgment. Rather, it is, we repeat, only and exclusively the “*ex parte subiecti*” of each intellectual and rational act. It is clear that one can inquire about this *notio* and make judgments about it. Like any other datum, it is then objectified: but it is not the content of these acts of understanding and judging that constitutes the *notio* of being. Rather, it is what is given in these acts *ex parte subiecti* and makes these acts possible. The acts can be more or less exact and true in regard to their content. One can also fail to understand this *notio*, make false judgments about it, and even deny it.

If one likes, one can speak of a certainty of being which exceeds every doubt. But the reason for this certainty is not some special evidence which would distinguish this knowledge from instances of knowledge which pertain to the external world. Rather, it is the fact that we find ourselves in a phase prior to judgment - simply, in our experiencing. This experience, however, in contrast to every other experience, can never be completely formed so that it can be raised to understanding and judgment. Such an understanding would have to be an insight into the whole; therefore it would have to be true and hence, if true, an insight that knows all of reality. However, our entire psychological experience testifies to us that we do not enjoy such an insight and that we do not reach such a judgment. This reveals to us the fact that our knowing is an indefinite process.<sup>67</sup> It is

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<sup>66</sup>These objective contents are known either *sub ratione intelligibilis* if they concern acts of the *prima mentis operatio*, or *sub ratione veri et entis* if they concern acts of the *secunda mentis operatio*.

<sup>67</sup>“What is being? .... being is completely universal and completely concrete; apart from it, there is nothing; and so knowledge of what being is cannot be had in anything less than an act of understanding everything about everything. Correlative to an unrestricted desire to understand, there may be posited either an indefinite process of development or an unrestricted act of understanding.” (*Insight XIX 4: 2666; 1642f.*)

always engaged in inquiry and in trying to discover realities that are still unknown. Since it is a matter of experience, we can apply to it the statement which Lonergan makes in reference to experience in general: "What can be doubted is the answer to a question for reflection; it is a yes or a no. But the given is not the answer to any question; it is prior to questioning and independent of any answers."<sup>68</sup>

If, however, one speaks of the judgment of consciousness with respect to oneself as a knower, then we have already pointed out the spontaneity of such a judgment, the illogicality of its negation, and, therefore, the certainty which it enjoys. But, one sees clearly that it has nothing to do with the certainty of any experience of being from which we can derive knowledge of reality or which we can somehow thematize. It is the certainty of the particular being which happens to be my "I", which knows and judges according to the fundamental structure that is effective in our whole process of knowing. In any case, it is a certainty which does not guarantee the prior horizon of being. On the contrary, one does not grasp its true meaning, if one does not grasp it from the horizon outlined by our unrestricted desire to know the horizon of being.

#### IV. THE DOUBLE FUNCTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN REFERENCE TO BEING

##### 1. Consciousness as experience of oneself

In the preceding section, we took up two aspects or elements which one can distinguish in the knowledge of performance of which Coreth speaks. For us, this differentiation appears to be of the greatest significance in grounding our human knowing in a way which should overcome every form of naive realism: that characterized by extroversion and also that characterized by introversion. These two elements are: the function of consciousness in relation to self-knowledge and its function in relation to all human knowing, and even to the entire psychological life of men.

Lonergan systematically deals with consciousness in *Insight*, in the chapter where he discusses the self-affirmation of the knower and in his theological writings, when he discusses the problem of Christ's consciousness in terms of whether Christ, as a human person, knew himself to be the son of God. There, his first concern is to emphasize the distinctions which exist between consciousness and knowing i.e., how consciousness is only one component in relation to the second; namely, the experiential component which exists within the dynamic structure of human knowing. With respect to this aspect - which we do not claim is the most important one for the concept of consciousness - consciousness is less than knowing. It is not a knowing of oneself *sub ratione entis* [under the aspect of something that is] but only *sub ratione experti* [under the aspect of something experienced]. It is necessary to make this distinction in order to grasp, in this case too, knowing as a structure. This grasp comes from an analysis of knowing based upon the psychological data and not on a naive analogy with the act of seeing.

The claim that the subject does not know itself in its psychological acts *sub ratione entis* denies that consciousness is a perception. If one believes that consciousness is a perceiving, then, in every psychological act, besides the perception of the object, there exists a direct and immediate perception of the subject and its act. However, with such a conception of consciousness it is difficult to explain in what relation, so to speak, the main object stands with respect to the secondary objects. One would say that the first is the thematic object, *signate* [explicitly

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<sup>68</sup>*Insight* XIII 4: <sup>2</sup>406; <sup>1</sup>382.



designated], whereas the others are merely experienced unthematically, *exercite* [in the act], as they accompany the first. This can be understood correctly. But this correct understanding is endangered unless one gives up equating the known with an object and pays attention to that dimension of the act of knowing which is not oriented to an object opposed to it, i.e., the dimension oriented to the subject. In that way the unthematic, the experienced *exercite*, is not conceived as a more or less obscure object, but as the presence of the subject to itself in its operations.

This, to us, seems to have an immediate importance for the correct posing of the question about the objectivity of human knowing. If, namely, one regards consciousness as a perceiving of oneself and one's own act *ex parte obiecti*, then one comes almost perforce - because what is perceived is limited - to the conception of a closed inner space. From there the problem arises about how one might overcome immanentism, given the falsely posed question: is our knowing restricted to what is directly perceived in consciousness and is therefore beyond all doubt? Is it restricted to the contents of consciousness, or is it open to a perception of reality that exceeds the restricted area of consciousness? If, however, consciousness does not mean perception *ex parte obiecti*, then the problem does not arise of shifting from immanent to transcendent objects. Strictly speaking, consciousness has no content as object. There is only the question of the transition from what is purely grasped as datum to the knowing of the same as being. This is nothing other than the general question: by means of what acts is human knowing carried out?<sup>69</sup>

If there are no contents of consciousness [in the sense of perception of objects], it is not possible to speak properly of judgments of consciousness.<sup>70</sup> In addition, a fundamental difficulty remains with respect to the term "judgments of consciousness" since it is not clear what is known with these judgments if, *ex hypothesi* [from this hypothesis], their content, as being, is already known in the immediate perception of consciousness. With greater accuracy, Lonergan names those judgments, which are often referred to as judgments of consciousness, as judgments which belong to the introspective process, the first level of which is formed by the data of consciousness.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, what is known through these judgments is known already in its transcendence, in its being-in-itself since it is known by means of a judgment that corresponds to our intention of being,

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<sup>69</sup>In his definition of transcendence, Coreth refers to what is directly given in consciousness: transcendence is what exceeds the sphere of consciousness, while the immanent is what is given in consciousness and, therefore, as such does not refer to being in itself (*Metaphysik* 2518; 1603). Even though Coreth no doubt develops a transcendent realism in his metaphysics as a whole, it seems to us that the definition of transcendence lying at the basis of his concept of consciousness approaches that of *conscientia-perceptio* [consciousness as perception]. See *De Constitutione Christi* 91 [*Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* 173-5].

<sup>70</sup>Although Lonergan, in an in-depth analysis, examines the importance of consciousness for knowing about our knowledge, he never speaks about judgments of consciousness. Therefore, it is not quite correct when Otto Muck (*loc. cit.* 0. 247) refers to the judgment that is examined in chapter XI of *Insight* (Self-Affirmation of the Knower) as a judgment of consciousness. In this context, Lonergan is speaking of consciousness as the means whereby the conditions for an anticipated judgment to become a virtually unconditioned are given in consciousness and are therefore fulfilled.

<sup>71</sup>*Insight* IX: 1274.

which is not restricted by any principle of immanence. This does not differ from the way we know the external world.<sup>72</sup>

According to this function the experience of oneself can be completely objectified in self-affirmation, or, generally speaking, in introspective judgments. In such judgments, the presence of the self to itself is understood and unconditionally posited. Introspective judgments will differ from each other according to the different levels of consciousness: "I feel tired" differs from "I understand nothing about mathematics," which again differs from "I am sorry that I acted that way." In all cases, however, consciousness as the presence of the subject to itself is grasped through ordinary or scientific understanding, and this understanding is consequently grasped and affirmed as correct through reflective understanding.

## 2. Consciousness as the operative intelligible

We have also spoken about another constitutive element in our knowledge of performance; we can define it as the operative intelligible, referring to that level of consciousness that transcends the purely sensible level. It seems important to us to emphasize this second element because a one-sided focus on the first element could lead to a mere functional understanding of consciousness, and therefore to an emptying of consciousness that acknowledges only one's experience of oneself (*experientia sui*). That experience would then be known *ad modum obiecti* in an introspective judgment. In other words, consciousness would be a mere ascertainment of itself which would serve only as the basis of self-affirmation, even if one assumes that the ontological degree or status of this "self" varies according to the different levels of consciousness. The element which we want to analyze here, and which we designate as the operative intelligible, certainly exists in Lonergan. We find it in numerous places in his examination of human knowing where he refers to consciousness as an internal and effective norm in the process of knowing. Nevertheless, the systematic and exact analysis of the first element can lead to a neglect of the second element. The inexhaustible richness of this second element tempts us to overlook it because, in contrast to the first element, an exhaustive objectification of it is never possible.

What is consciousness as the operative intelligible in our performance? It is nothing but the intelligibility and the groundedness of being as the obverse. Therefore, an examination of this element of consciousness is nothing but a repetition - whereby we determine more exactly its relation to the other element - of what we have already said regarding the *notio* of being.

If it is true that consciousness [as inner experience] corresponds to outer experience, this does not mean that, fundamentally, consciousness is located only at the level of experience as opposed to the intellectual level. Rather, consciousness refers to the presence to itself of the subject, the operative intelligible, in all its performances. We can affirm a parallel: as we possess objects fully only by means of rational judgment *ex parte obiecti*, so the subject can fully grasp itself only *ex parte subiecti*. We want not to say that self-affirmation is without value; it is indeed necessary, but only in order to have a knowledge *ex parte obiecti* of ourselves in the same way as we have a knowledge

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<sup>72</sup>"Hence we place transcendence, not in going beyond a known knower, but in heading for being, within which there are positive differences and, among such differences, the difference between subject and object. Inasmuch as such judgments occur, there are in fact objectivity and transcendence." (*Insight XIII* 1: <sup>2</sup>401-2; <sup>1</sup>377)

of other objects *ex parte obiecti*, so that we can distinguish between ourselves and other objects. This self-objectification, however, which is absent on the level of consciousness [as inner experience], does not constitute my full and true possession of myself. If the self in and of itself is the measure of all things,<sup>73</sup> one cannot maintain that the subject takes possession of itself only in an objective knowledge of all other real things. That would amount to destroying the original meaning of the self which, as operative intelligible, is the focus of being in performance in so far as, from and of itself, it is the effective intelligibility and unconditioned that determines its object: being.

The statement that the self is the operative intelligible and therefore the focus of being means that it is a property of cognitive spirit to be able to bring to the level of actual intelligibility what is not yet actually intelligible in purely sensible presentations. At this point, the horizon of being with its two components, the objective and subjective poles and the tension between them appears to be the human mode of self-possession with respect to being. If the human spirit were--*per absurdum*—alone with its own intelligibility, it would exist as a whole. In fact the unlimitedness of the human spirit is more intensive than extensive. Its unlimitedness constitutes it as unconditioned and thus as being, so that if the human spirit were already, by itself, the whole, it would exist likewise as something unlimited and absolute. Only if, to the spirit, data – in different extents – are present, does the intensive unlimitedness of spirit reveal itself as the ability to ask questions about the other, because the data become the goal of a tension which arises between the operative intelligible, that is spirit, and the unintelligible which are the data. The horizon of being is precisely this tension.

In a certain sense, it is therefore true that one can ask about the origin of the horizon of being. We have previously noted<sup>74</sup> that, in amazement and wonder, we are given to ourselves in an unlimited way although, only potentially, as an active potency. Precisely this self-presence in such an unlimited potentiality constitutes our horizon of being. Now we can see more precisely that the spirit is determined as spirit not by its potency to possess everything but by its self-possession as a whole or entirety. It experiences itself thus as an intelligible in relation to the whole which is being. For the spirit, this experience of being can never be completely absent, whatever the situation it may be in. Spirit is always the *notio* of being of which we have spoken. It is the experience of being - if we understand experience not as a partial component of knowing but as the whole of a knowing that is originally presence, possession of oneself, identity. In this sense, we agree [with Coreth] that in our knowledge of performance an identity exists between being and knowing and that this identity lies at the origin of the horizon of being. Also we agree that in intellectual consciousness there is given an experience of being which is a more original and basic grasping of being than that grasping of being which occurs in judgment. Consciousness is nothing other than the presence of the operative intelligible to itself, and it is therefore already an *intelligere* [act of understanding], since the self-possession of the operative intelligible can be correctly named an *intelligere*. It is, however, an *intelligere* which differs from the *intelligere ex parte obiecti* [understanding (something) as an object] in reference to empirical data, since it is much more original than this. If one acknowledges this character of subjective intelligibility and thus being as

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<sup>73</sup>In Lonergan's analysis, normative objectivity is fidelity to the pure desire to know: "Normative objectivity is constituted by the immanent exigence of the pure desire in the pursuit of its unrestricted objective" (*Insight XIII* 3: <sup>2</sup>404; <sup>1</sup>380).

<sup>74</sup>See above Section III, 1.

the identity of intelligibility with oneself without any objectification or duality, then all that Coreth says about the experience of being and the certainty of being in consciousness seems right to us.

After having emphasized the original meaning of the I and of being, this operative intelligible requires also an intelligibility *ex parte obiecti*. Only then do we have formally the horizon of being, the *notio* of being as *intentio intendens*, as unthematized knowledge about being. What is not essential for the spirit as such is, however, constitutive for the human spirit as spirit in the world. The self-possession of the whole, the experience of being which is already an understanding of being, carries itself out in us only in the mode of tension. This means that our spirit is intelligible in act only when it turns to a datum which it tries to make intelligible. Similarly, on the ontological level, the human spirit has its being only in its giving form to matter. This throwing of its own light on a datum is the original wonder, the formulated question, and the entire subsequent process of knowing. In this sense, it is true that the wonder, the horizon of being formally as horizon, has its origin in that operative intelligible which is the I.

Within the tension of the horizon of being, which is to be understood as a pure anticipation, every experience (whether inner or outer) is only a first and partial element of human knowing. With respect to such knowing, self-affirmation is an instance of complete knowing. Obviously, however, self-affirmation is not the operative intelligible. The operative intelligible is only the subject formally as subject. Within the sphere of being, self-affirmation represents the presence of the subject to itself in consciousness as a particular subject, whereas the primary function of consciousness exists indefeasibly *ex parte subiecti*. In other words: the operative intelligible cannot be other than subjective.

### Conclusion

The goal of our study has been to formulate the function of consciousness in a critical foundation of human knowing. It seems to us that Lonergan's *Insight* and Coreth's *Metaphysik* largely agree in their solutions despite their different questions and different cultural context. The reservations which we have expressed, especially with respect to paragraph thirteen in Coreth's *Metaphysik*, should serve much more to warn against a possibly false interpretation which would practically nullify the entire work of the *reditus ad subiectum* [return to the subject] that Coreth had carried out so clearly and systematically, than to lay stress on a real difference between the two authors. We are convinced that, despite the ambiguous positions that we have tried to point out and clarify, Coreth's train of thought is conducted in a way which exactly conforms to the analysis which Lonergan provides.

We have unfolded this train of thought in two steps: moving from the performance of our cognitive spirit in one of its acts (whether questioning or judgment), it has appeared that - whatever may be the thematic horizon of this performance (be it even a restricted and therefore conditioned horizon) - the always unthematized present and effective ultimate horizon (on the basis of which alone partial horizons are possible) is the unrestricted horizon of being. With respect to any thematic horizon, the horizon of being, which is to be identified with consciousness on the intellectual level, is the ultimate that we reach by searching for the conditions of possibility for knowing. It is completely *a priori* in the sense that it rejects every other ground, if one looks for such a ground in a particular knowing *ex parte obiecti*. In detail we have shown that such a ground is not given in

knowledge of oneself as performing a question. Rather, such a knowledge is to be obtained only through introspective judgment which already presupposes the horizon of being.

In a second step, we have tried to analyze intellectual consciousness more closely. In it, one can distinguish a secondary function as the horizon of being, its dynamism, its pure anticipation, from a primary function as intelligence in act which characterizes the spirit as spirit as of a subject. In this primary function, we have the original being-by-itself of being and therefore the self-possession of being, the experience of being: knowing. Here, we have the unity which precedes the duality of subjectivity and objectivity. It is in the duality, however, that our spirit must actuate itself as the operative intelligible, by engaging in wonder, by asking questions, seeking, reflecting in order to arrive at a knowledge of being the revelation of which is our spirit as finite spirit.

As Heidegger would say, consciousness is the place of truth because it is the place of unconcealment and of the manifestation of being.