

## Coping with Subjectivism and Relativism

Kant and Lonergan

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...on the level of judgment the agent object is the objective evidence provided by sense and/or empirical consciousness, ordered conceptually and logically in a *reductio ad principia*, and moving to the critical act of understanding. Corresponding to this agent object, there is the other terminal object, the inner word of judgment, the *verum*, in and through which is known the final object, the *ens reale*.<sup>1</sup>

In the language of our current cultural context, “subjectivism” implies relativity or relativism: lack of objectivity and even opposition to objectivity. To be subjective is to avoid objectivity. Subjectivity excludes objectivity. Subjectivism in human persons suggests that, as long as this condition lasts in persons, it is not possible for anyone to move into objectivity, to attain any form of self-transcendence. This is the present commonly accepted meaning which is dominant in our day. However, since this position is an inherited understanding of subjectivity, an historical explanation should point to sources and points of origin and also possibly reveal alternative understandings which can indicate the shortcomings of these commonly received views. Is the heart of the matter a particular theory of subjectivity which has become normative in our culture and which all seem to accept? The problem with accepting the modern roots inherent within the cultural view of the human subject is that those opposed to subjectivism tend to reject all valid discussion of the human subject and actor. These roots had reached their fruition in modern thought within Immanuel Kant. The Catholic response to this problematic version of the human person and its rejection of objectivity was propounded nearly 200 years later by the 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian and philosopher, Bernard Lonergan. Far from being an anti-objectivist, Lonergan uncovered the ancient discovery of the human mind and metaphysics, advanced both, and revealed how, with a firm grounding in tradition, one could answer the modern challenge of knowing reality, of objectivity.

In Kant, an essential opposition between subjectivism and objectivity is regarded as inherent and endemic to the position that he takes on human cognition. Prior to Kant, David Hume had argued that objectivity should be regarded as an empty claim. Sense perceptions cannot, of themselves, account for the intelligible relations which the new laws of science were then articulating and proposing.<sup>2</sup> Repetitions within nature do not guarantee any necessity with respect to their reoccurrence. Changes in routine can always happen. They cannot be denied without risk of contradiction. Thus, for Hume, connections, causal relations, and unifications in our knowing exist only because of arbitrary impositions deriving from human custom and habit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>Richard M. Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 79, citing Lonergan.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, eds. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,

But, these intrusions lack rational grounds since, for Hume, they are conventional intrusions which vary from person to person and from society to society. Their status is purely subjective. Objectivity does not exist (even if the making of such a claim is an act which suggests the validity of objectivity in human knowing).

Kant's response admits that the laws of science do not come from "sense impressions." They must have another source and, when Kant argues with Hume that they are to be viewed as human impositions, he agrees with part of Hume's basic thesis. But, Kant differs from Hume in his explanation. "Connections, causal relations, unifications in our knowledge" are explained by the invariant aprioricity of the human mind.<sup>4</sup> *A priori* structures within the human senses and the human mind organize the data of sense which human persons experience. Data of sense are not to be identified with things as they exist in and among themselves although these real and objective things (whatever they might be) cause the "sense impressions" which are received by our empirical human sensing.<sup>5</sup> "Sense impressions" are to be identified with their subjective human apprehensions of them. They are to be identified with appearances, with how things appear or exist from the viewpoint of our human sensing. All sensible presentations are phenomenal.<sup>6</sup> They present a world of appearances: things-for-us, things "relative to us,"<sup>7</sup> *uti apparent*<sup>8</sup> instead of things-in-themselves.<sup>9</sup> Hence, in a Kantian theory of knowledge, one must deny that a scientific knowledge of reality is really possible. In saying, for instance, that "a field is green," one avers a truth. One makes a claim about reality, about objectivity. One speaks about a "real field" and a "real property." But, when, with Kant, one prefers to say that "a street looks green," one speaks about "the way things look."<sup>10</sup> One faithfully reports what one's senses are communicating through their activity and the difference implies that reality is not to be confused with phenomena, with how things appear. A phenomenal world is to be contrasted with a noumenal or real world. The phenomenal world is subjective; the noumenal, objective.

In a way, thus, Kant fundamentally agrees with Aristotle. Aristotle had distinguished between "the things that are first in themselves" and "the things that are first in regard to us" (*priora quoad se* versus *priora quoad nos*).<sup>11</sup> Human cognition begins with what is most immediate to us: with phenomena that is supplied to us by our senses which reveal a world constituted by the appearances of things. Sensible presentations present a world of appearances: things-for-us,

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1993), pp. 182-3 citing Hume.

<sup>4</sup>Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, pp. 183-4.

<sup>5</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 447.

<sup>6</sup>Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 178.

<sup>7</sup>Giovanni B. Sala, "Kant's Theory of Knowledge," *Lonergan Workshop: Lonergan and the Human Sciences*, vol. 16, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston College, 2000), p. 205.

<sup>8</sup>Sala, "Kant's Theory of Knowledge," p. 200.

<sup>9</sup>George S. Worgul, Jr., doctoral dissertation: *Man Standing Open to Revelation: Lonergan's Theology of Revelation* (Louvain: Catholic University of Louvain, 1974, unpublished), p. 112.

<sup>10</sup>Bernard Lonergan, "Consciousness and Trinity," *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, eds. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 232.

<sup>11</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971), p. 17.

things “relative to us”<sup>12</sup> instead of things-in-themselves.<sup>13</sup> But, where Aristotle had argued that intelligible connections are grasped within data through suggestive images and diagrams which trigger acts of understanding or insights,<sup>14</sup> in Kant’s understanding of cognition, forms are imposed by laws internal to the human mind.<sup>15</sup> *A priori* structures within sensing and thinking organize what is sensibly given in data in a way which posits connections or links within data. To data, meaning is added (A  $\propto$  B). Concepts are added to appearances by a synthesis that produces a hybrid combination of appearances and concepts. *A priori* structures synthetically add intelligible content to a sense object.<sup>16</sup> But, in this synthesis, the forms added to the contents of acts of sensing are strictly innate.<sup>17</sup> They are known apart from *a posteriori* experience. Their employment proves that an *a priori* knowledge of objects already exists.<sup>18</sup> Meaning is radically immanent and eminently subjective. It does not arise through any working with images in connection with data. Knowledge of reality as objectivity is not attainable. In Kant’s understanding, how human persons have been created explains why objective human knowing is impossible.

Since human cognition operates in a self-enclosed manner, making affirmations about reality or “simply to say, ‘It is,’ is just to talk.”<sup>19</sup> Human cognition cannot move beyond a preoccupation with ideas and concepts.<sup>20</sup> *Verstand*, the human faculty of thinking or speculation, produces concepts that are related to each other through ideas expressed in synthetic judgments imposed by the mind. *Vernunft*, the faculty of judgment, evaluation, or reason, through its ideas, only systematically orders the concepts that have already been produced through the *a priori* structures present in sensing and thinking.<sup>21</sup> Judgment is not very clearly distinguished from thinking or understanding since, for instance, Kant says that “we can reduce all acts of the understanding to judgment, and the *understanding* may therefore be represented as a *faculty of judgment*.”<sup>22</sup> Although judgment seeks truth as an unconditioned (a truth is always true), the senses cannot provide an unconditioned or an absolute.<sup>23</sup> Pure reason as a desire for truth or

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<sup>12</sup>Sala, “Kant’s Theory of Knowledge,” p. 205.

<sup>13</sup>Worgul, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup>Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 8, 432a 3-10; see also 7, 431a 14, 431b 2.

<sup>15</sup>Kant, *dissertation* of 1770, cited by Giovanni B. Sala, “The Role of the A Priori in Knowledge: On a Fundamental Problem in Kantian Critique,” *Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, ed. Robert M. Doran, trans. Joseph Spoerl (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 36.

<sup>16</sup>Giovanni B. Sala, “The A Priori in Human Knowledge: Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason and Lonergan’s Insight,” *Lonergan and Kant*, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup>Sala, “The A Priori in Human Knowledge,” pp. 19-20; “Kant’s Theory of Knowledge,” p. 208 citing Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (B 1), (A 125, B XIV), (B 159-160, 163), (A 126), and (A 129).

<sup>18</sup>Sala, “The A Priori in Human Knowledge,” p. 20.

<sup>19</sup>Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, p. 184.

<sup>20</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 643-4, B 671-2; cited by Lonergan, “Natural Knowledge of God,” *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1974), p. 122.

<sup>21</sup>Sala, ““Kant’s Theory of Knowledge,” p. 207.

<sup>22</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 69, B 94.

<sup>23</sup>Sala, ““Kant’s Theory of Knowledge,” p. 207.

reality is best interpreted as a transcendental illusion.<sup>24</sup>

With respect to objectivity, in Kant, an immediate relation to an object or objectivity is only given through sensible intuition (*Anschauung*).<sup>25</sup> *Anschauung* and *anschauen* in German respectively mean “seeing” and “to see.”<sup>26</sup> Through sensible or spiritual intuitions (“spiritual apprehensions” in the language of medieval scholastics<sup>27</sup>), one is directly connected to reality or real objects.<sup>28</sup> Intuition is basic (and not judgment).<sup>29</sup> Knowing occurs when, as intuition operates on appearances, it produces concepts.<sup>30</sup>

Knowledge involves two factors: first, the concept, through which an object in general is thought (the category); and secondly, the intuition, through which it is given. For if no intuition could be given corresponding to the concept, the concept would still indeed be a thought, so far as its form is concerned, but would be without any object, and no knowledge of anything would be possible by means of it...<sup>31</sup>

Our knowledge springs from two fundamental sources of the mind; the first is the capacity of receiving representations (receptivity for impressions), the second is the power of knowing an object through these representations (spontaneity of concepts). Through the first an object is given to us, through the second the object is thought in relation to that representation (which is a mere determination of the mind). Intuition and concepts constitute, therefore, the elements of all our knowledge, so that neither concepts without an intuition in some way corresponding to them, nor intuition without concepts, can yield knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

Intuition, as an activity, outranks all other acts. “In whatever manner and by whatever means a mode of knowledge may relate to objects, *intuition* [*Anschauung*] is that through which it is in immediate relation to them, and to which all thought [*alles Denken*] as a means is

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<sup>24</sup>Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, p. 184.

<sup>25</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 68, B 93; cited by Lonergan as *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 68, B 93 in “The Subject,” *Second Collection*, p. 78.

<sup>26</sup>Sala, “Kant’s Theory of Knowledge,” *Lonergan Workshop*, pp. 205-6.

<sup>27</sup>Lonergan, *Fragments*, 7 cited by Liddy, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being: An Introduction and Companion to **Insight** The Halifax Lectures*, eds. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli (Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), p. 320.

<sup>29</sup>Lonergan, “Consciousness and the Trinity,” *Papers*, pp. 133-4.

<sup>30</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on **Insight**, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 5, eds. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli, revised and augmented by Frederick E. Crowe with the collaboration of Elizabeth A. Morelli, Mark D. Morelli, Robert M. Doran, and Thomas V. Daly (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 179, 277.

<sup>31</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 146, cited by Terry J. Tekippe, *What is Lonergan Up to in INSIGHT?* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 121.

<sup>32</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 74, cited by Tekippe, p. 121.

directed...sensibility alone yields us *intuitions*.”<sup>33</sup> “No representation, save when it is an intuition, is in immediate relation to an object.”<sup>34</sup> What is known is only that which has been experienced or which can be experienced through the senses.<sup>35</sup> Hence, for epistemology, knowing is a form of looking or seeing. Human understanding is “a faculty which by itself knows nothing whatsoever, but merely combines and arranges the material of knowledge, that is, the intuition, which must be given to it by the object.”<sup>36</sup> The categories and concepts of understanding exist at a first remove from sensible intuition and ground a mediate, non-immediate relation between a human subject and objects of knowledge. Thinking leads to relations with reality that are indirect and ambiguous. *A priori* categories of understanding directly work with sensible intuitions; they are indirectly related to objects that are immediately given in sensible intuitions. Judgment is directly related to understanding but exists at an ever further remove from the early and primary intuitions of sense.<sup>37</sup> While understanding has a sensible object or representation that corresponds to it, judgment has no corresponding sensible object.<sup>38</sup> As Kant argues:

Reason [judgment] is never in immediate relation to an object, but only to the understanding; and it is only through the understanding that it has its own [specific] empirical employment. It does not, therefore, *create* concepts (of objects) but only *orders* them, and gives them that unity which they can have only if they be employed in their widest possible application, that is, with a view to obtaining totality in the various series. The understanding does not concern itself with this totality, but only with that connection through which, in accordance with *concepts*, such *series* of conditions *come into being*. Reason [judgment] has, therefore, as its sole object, the understanding and its effective application. Just as the understanding unifies the manifold in the object by means of concepts, so reason [judgment] unifies the manifold concepts by means of ideas, positing a certain collective unity as the goal of the activities of the understanding, which otherwise are concerned solely with distributive unity.<sup>39</sup>

Hence, if, in knowledge, persons are directly related to reality, and, if this type of knowledge is limited to sensible intuitions, understanding and judgment both play a non-constitutive role in human cognition. They reveal no reality. What is real is only what can be sensed or experienced. Scientific knowledge is not what it claims to be or thinks that it is. Its laws reveal nothing beyond concepts and ideas. Metaphysics lacks status. It is impossible to do. It lacks rational grounds.

However, in contrast with these prevailing Kantian views, 200 years later, Bernard Lonergan

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<sup>33</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 19, B 33.

<sup>34</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 68, B 93.

<sup>35</sup>Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, p. 184.

<sup>36</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 145, cited by Sala, “Kant’s Theory of Knowledge,” p. 208.

<sup>37</sup>Lonergan, “The Subject,” *Second Collection*, p. 78, citing Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 643, B 671.

<sup>38</sup>Giovanni B. Sala, “Kant’s Theory of Human Knowledge: A Sensualistic Version of Intuitionism,” *Lonergan and Kant*, p. 57.

<sup>39</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 643-4, B 671-2.

argues that human cognition is not ultimately a simple, single act grounded in intuition. We are incarnate beings, incarnate spirits, and because we are a union of spirit and matter, human cognition occurs through an interaction between human acts of sensing and human acts of inquiry. The starting point for knowing is a human person who is aware of a difference between knowing and not knowing. “A man in confusion or wonder is conscious of being ignorant.”<sup>40</sup> Without knowing that we do not know, how would we know later that we know and that we are no longer in a state of ignorance about something? The point of this query is to suggest that human knowing is not a simple, single act but a combination of acts that build on one another in a self-assembling kind of way. Human knowing occurs because it has a specific causality.<sup>41</sup> A question is asked because one wants to know something, and as one attempts to answer a question, one acts in a way that is guided by a causality which possesses a final term: a finality. This is the causality or finality of truth. A truth is initially unknown, but one’s desire for it unleashes an intention or an intentionality for knowledge which, in more traditional language, refers to a natural appetite for knowledge. This natural appetite, in its dynamism, reveals an inner, self-transcending finality, a “dynamic finality within objective knowing.”<sup>42</sup> Questions can be asked about anything and the infinite striving which belongs to human inquiry, in an anticipatory way, immediately relates a person to all things, to all that is, or, in other words, to all encompassing being, the object of a general metaphysics.

This self-assembling nature of human inquiry explains why human knowing only begins with experiencing or sense perception, and why it is not exhausted by experiencing or engaging in the various acts of sense. Knowing is not so much a form of looking (a looking at what is to be seen) but a form of evaluation or judgment which comes at the end of a long process since, at the end, one must decide if, in fact, something is so, if something is true or real. Is a particular idea a good idea? Knowing terminates in an act of rational reflection which is grounded upon an act of reflective understanding. It concludes a process that first begins with the data of sense and the human experiencing of these data. Animal knowing is limited to sense perception. But, human knowing is a compound which ultimately leads to an act of judgment which posits the reality or the truth of a possible relation that has been grasped by an insight which is not judgment but another kind of intellectual act (and, thus, also, not an act of sense). Differences distinguish acts and how they relate to one another. The experience of ourselves given in consciousness suggests these differences and what they might be. However, lack of inquiry into our self-experience encourages us to confuse different kinds of acts with one another and we can begin to think that human cognition is more simple and immediate than what it really is, and that, in essence, our knowing is no different than that of the more advanced animals.

To address this problem, at least partly, in Book 2 of the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle undertook an inquiry into the nature of scientific inquiry.<sup>43</sup> To reach a better understanding of the nature of science as the habit and practice of critical understanding, Aristotle asked about the form of the question. What is the form of the question? What is a scientific question? What is its intelligibility? What does one want to know when one asks a scientific question? What does a

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<sup>40</sup>Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982b18.

<sup>41</sup>Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup>Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique, Cahier III: La critique de Kant* (Louvain: Museum Lessinum; Paris: Alcan, 1926), p. 4.

<sup>43</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 26, citing Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, II, 2, 89b 36-90a 34).

scientific investigation seek to attain? What does a scientific understanding consist of? Discover the form or the intelligibility of the question, and one should be able to identify the general content of all scientific answers and activities which lead to scientific understanding. In his *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle thus postulated that all questions can be reduced to four basic types: whether there is an *X*; what is an *X*; whether *X* is *Y*; and why *X* is *Y*. However, as one examines this classification and Aristotle's arguments (and as Bernard Lonergan himself argues), one finds that these questions can be reduced to two basic types. "Whether there is an *X*" and "whether *X* is *Y*" are both answered by only saying "yes" or "no." All other responses are excluded. On the other hand, "what is an *X*" and "why *X* is *Y*" can only be answered by suggesting an explanation or hypothesis. One postulates a possible connection or a relation that has been somehow grasped. In asking why, what, or how questions, one seeks an answer whose general designation is form. Form specifies an intelligible relation as opposed to a datum or data of sense and this intelligible relation is not grasped by any act of sense, but by an act of understanding which can be referred to as the *prima mentis operatio*, "the first operation of the mind."<sup>44</sup> Lonergan's term is "direct insight." On the other hand, in asking "Is it so?" questions, one seeks another kind of answer which affirms a fact or an actuality. By a *secunda mentis operatio*, a "second operation of the mind," one takes an intelligibility and one affirms its truth or reality. Act emerges as the general object of questions that seek to make a judgment. Human inquiry possesses a form that acknowledges two distinct forms of intelligibility, two distinct formal objects: form and act. As Aquinas argues, "the first operation of the intellect regards the quiddity or whatness of a thing; the second regards its existence or act of being."<sup>45</sup>

An adequate understanding of human cognition thus acknowledges two forms of intellectual activity which are related to each other and which employ distinct procedures because of distinct requirements that each must meet. The rationality of one type of inquiry should not be confused with the rationality of the other. An act of direct understanding initially transcends acts of sense while an act of reflective understanding transcends initial acts of sense and understanding. Data is subsumed by form and form by act. By employing Aristotle's inquiry into the nature of scientific questions and by refining it, one can establish correlatives which function as the basic components of a verifiable metaphysics. From experiencing, understanding, and judging come potency, form, and act. Through judgment, rational judgment, truth is encountered and, through truth, being or reality (as in Augustine's notion of *veritas* and Aquinas's notion of being or *esse*<sup>46</sup>). Judgments mediate the human experience of subjectivity with an experience which transcends subjectivity. A correct understanding of subjectivity reveals a fundamental orientation that is directed toward objectivity. God has so made us that our spirits are ordered toward self-transcendence: toward being and God. The actuation of this God given order denotes what Lonergan means by "authentic subjectivity" although the use of the term "authentic" immediately introduces a qualification since human subjectivity is often "inauthentic."

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<sup>44</sup>Giovanni B. Sala, "Kant and Lonergan on Insight Into the Sensible," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995): 93; "Lonergan on the Virtually Unconditioned as the Ground of Judgment," <http://www.lonergan.org/Sala/Lonergan%20on%20the%20Virtually%20Unconditioned-T2.htm>.

<sup>45</sup>Aquinas, *Super I Sententiarum*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7m.

<sup>46</sup>Matthew C. Ogilvie, *Faith Seeking Understanding: The Functional Specialty, "Systematics," in Bernard Lonergan's Method in Theology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), p. 16.

Authentic subjectivity is a precarious achievement. Bias threatens human inquiry and often thwarts our desires for full self-transcendence. Sin emerges in what should not be. It is defined by a lack of meaning or intelligibility. It is the antithesis of good.

The problem with current, contemporary understandings of subjectivity is an empiricism that wants to reduce human cognition to acts of sense. However, if our understanding of human experience is broadened to include all our conscious acts (experienced in the data of our human consciousness), we can begin to have experiences of self that reveal an orientation that is constitutive of ourselves as human subjects: an orientation toward reality that is not the reality of extroverted sensible experience but a reality which is brought to us through acts of understanding and correct judgment. Current views of human cognition, which have come down to us from Kantian analysis, fail to advert to a psychological fact that Aristotle had noticed. Human understanding initially occurs through constructing images located within data. As Aquinas had noted, “we can all experience in ourselves that, when we try to understand something, we form for ourselves images, by way of examples, in which as it were we inspect what we desire to understand.”<sup>47</sup> Initial acts of understanding give us ideas. However, beyond failing to speak about how our understanding initially works with data and images to get ideas, Kantian analysis does not offer a critical theory of judgment. Judgment is not clearly distinguished from an understanding that speaks about possible intelligible relations. No critical theory of judgment explains how it is possible to move from possible intelligible relations to our experience of real intelligible relations.

Judgment is not supposed to be an essentially willful act. Willful acts are essentially arbitrary. They cannot be the result or term of reasoning. For an act to be a judgment, to be rational, a prospective judgment must ask for reasons. Requiring a sufficient number of pertinent reasons thus explains why the principle of sufficient reason has been used as a traditional explanation for the specific rationality of judgment. However, it is one thing to speak about the principle of sufficient reason and another to explain how reasons can be elicited and how they related to each other and connected to a prospective judgment.

In contrast with prevailing Kantian views, Bernard Lonergan argues that judgment has an intelligible structure of its own which is not that well known but which merits attention and identification. The problem is as follows. The reflective understanding of judgment begins with a synthesis that it has inherited. A prior act of understanding, *verstand*, has grasped a possibly relevant relation which can be a truly relevant relation. Truth is a possible status which, as yet, has not been grasped. But, the postulation of possibly relevant relations implies contingency or possible non-existence. Contingency presents itself as a problem for judgment since possible relations and connections do not have to exist. Their existence is not necessary. Existence only occurs if certain conditions have been or are fulfilled. Hence, a prospective judgment engages in three related, distinct tasks. First, just by asking if an intelligible object, an idea, truly or really exists, one changes this object into a conditioned. Questioning creates conditions within human cognition that must be met if judgment is to occur.<sup>48</sup> A conditioned can only be said to exist if

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<sup>47</sup>Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 84, a. 7 c.

<sup>48</sup>Matthew C. Ogilvie, “What is ‘Intellectual Conversion’?”, *Australian Lonergan Workshop II*, eds. Matthew C. Ogilvie and William J. Danaher (Sydney, Australia: Novum Organum Press, 2002), p. 40.

certain conditions are fulfilled. Then, secondly, a prospective judgment asks about these conditions. Conditioned and conditions are linked in a connection that is suggested by the transition from experiencing to initial understanding, but what conditions must be met if one is to say that a relation obtains or an event occurs? Then, thirdly and lastly, questions arise about fulfillment. Are the conditions being met? Are they fulfilled or are they being fulfilled? These questions all appear to be simple. However, if we look at examples in the history of science, the determination of conditions and the search for evidence that fulfills conditions is a labor that cannot be reduced to a simple act of sense, a simple act of experiencing. Initial investigations had led Galileo to postulate that objects fall with increasing speed in a manner that has nothing to do with weight. He postulated a formula ( $d = 1/2at^2$ ), but to verify his hypothesis, he had to identify a correlation between distance and time which, if verified in data, would prove the truth of his hypothesis. After determining the conditions needed for making a prospective judgment, he had to find a way to collect evidence and take measurements. Judgment occurs through variously combining mental and sensible acts which, together, respectively function in a reductive fashion. In reasoning, one attends to a relation which already exists between past experiencing and understanding and one articulates this relation to determine conditions of possibility. If p, then q. But, if one's analysis is to be critical, it must ground itself in a basic set of laws that are constitutive of the human mind, laws which Aquinas refers to as "first principles."<sup>49</sup> Primary examples include the principle of identity and the derivative principle of non-contradiction. The principle of the excluded middle is a second derivative. Analysis based on these principles (functioning as the habit of principles or the habit of intellect, *habitus principiorum*) identifies a particular species of experience whose enjoyment is sought. Givenness to experience immediately indicates that a condition has been fulfilled. It has been met. And, thus, a conditioned is turned into an unconditioned. Conditions obtain for contingent matters of fact but, now, they are fulfilled. In this theory of judgment, sufficient reason is transformed into a theory of the "virtually unconditioned" which grounds concrete judgments of fact. An "absolutely unconditioned," on the other hand, refers to non-contingent being, God.

In conclusion, it is not possible to deny that current understandings of subjectivity present serious problems for Catholic theology. A self-enclosed subjectivity is always turned in on itself. Egocentric behavior is encouraged and the price exacted is the destruction of human community and the persons who might try and live within these same communities. Religious meanings and truths less easily enter into one's life and the ensuing restricted world of meaning is no longer ordered to the existence of other worlds and dimensions of meaning. Subjectivity presents a problem for theology which recalls the crisis which faced Catholic theology in the days of Aquinas beginning late in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and on into the 13<sup>th</sup>. As the major works of Aristotle's philosophy were becoming available to cultured Europeans, they encouraged skeptical views which questioned the value of traditional Catholic theology. As in subjectivism, so too in Aristotle's philosophy, forms of analysis and understanding exist that seem to owe nothing to religion, especially to a religion which regarded itself as revealed by God. By working from its own principles, unaided human intellect can adequately serve as an organizing principle for persons who must cope with the trials and difficulties of daily life. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Descartes initiated a similar shift in human thinking through questions that led to the birth to modern philosophy and to a new focus expressed by a "turn to the subject" which subsequently grounded the development of modern subjectivism in modern philosophy.

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<sup>49</sup>Aquinas, *Super Ioannem*, c. 1, lect. 1.

Copernican heliocentrism had raised questions about the validity of common sense. Is common sense to be trusted? Is it only a disguise for ignorance? Is skepticism the best answer? If so, where, and to what degree? What is the relation between the ordinary experience and claims of common sense and the achievements of scientific theory? Can reflection on cognition build a foundation from which one can ground any subsequent claims that are made about human knowing? By systematically applying the principle of doubt to all things, Descartes concluded that the doubting, questioning subject is unable to doubt the events of his or her doubting and questioning. The doubting verifies the reality, or the objectivity, of the questioning subject and, as a result, the doubting, questioning human subject moves to the center of modern thought. This “turn to the subject” sets the agenda for the questions and inquiries of later philosophy. “I think, therefore I am.” *Cogito, ergo sum*.<sup>50</sup> The “I think” reveals “thinking thing,” “thinking substance,” or *res cogitans* as a distinct order of reality. Its self-sufficiency implies lack of dependence on that which does not think: the world constituted by matter. Mind lives apart from matter which, in turn, has an existence of its own as a being, thing, or reality which is “extended”: *res extensa*. The lack of relation between mind and matter inhibits possibly understanding how these two principles can relate to each other. The human “I think” lives in a world of its own. A self-enclosed understanding of human subjectivity emerges.

In responding to the challenge presented by modern subjectivism, the response that had been initiated by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas with respect to Aristotelianism presents a useful analogy. Instead of rejecting Aristotle (and they were not unaware of shortcomings in his thought), they decided to enter into the depths of his thought and to work from within it to fashion new tools of analysis for Catholic theology. Through a creative and critical adaptation, the philosophy of a pagan became the friend and ally of religious believers. A rhetorical echo suggests a debt that is owed and paid to both Aquinas and to Aristotle. Catholic theology has benefitted from the thought of both men. Theology grew in explanatory power. An encounter which could have weakened Catholic theology led to its growth and rejuvenation. This example thus suggests that modern inquiries into the human subject will only become a tool for Catholic theology only if the real, objective human subject is fully appropriated by Catholic philosophers and theologians. As Aristotle’s philosophy, in its day, began to set the agenda for the culture of Western Europe, modern subjectivism has been shaping the contours of our contemporary culture. But, if the deleterious consequences of this influence are to be overcome, the only real solution is one which works from within the human subject and actor, employing the resultant tools of analysis to indicate how full blown subjectivity must reveal meanings which acknowledge a divine source and a divine order. Human subjectivity, no less than humanity, has been created by God. If a sympathetic but yet critical understanding of subjectivity is not attempted, the work which Aquinas had attempted will not be accomplished in our own time and era and the challenges to the human person posed by modern versions of the human subject and the resultant subjectivism will not be truly answered. Only an authentic subjectivity is truly objective and objectivity is only reached by genuine subjectivity: by an experiencing, questioning, thinking, understanding, judging, and loving human subject.

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<sup>50</sup>Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, 1992, p. 186, citing Descartes.