

Understanding Lonergan's Notion of the Subject

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To understand Lonergan's notion of the subject, as a point of departure, one must advert to the fact that consciousness (the condition or state of being conscious or possessing consciousness) is something that Lonergan very frequently speaks about. He identifies being conscious or consciousness with an interior awareness or sense that a person has of him or herself as a living human being. In some way, one knows that one is alive and, as one lives and changes, one knows that, in some way, these changes affect who one is at any given time. And so, by being aware or conscious of one's life and being, one is aware of the fact that one is a human subject. One is aware of one's subjectivity: who one is, as a point of origin, or as a subject of different acts and what one can do as an originator or as a subject of different acts.

To get a sense about what Lonergan is talking about, however, perhaps one can begin by looking back and seeing how Lonergan references St. Augustine in order to move from St. Augustine's distinctions which speak about two different kinds of presence or object to distinctions which speak about three different kinds of presence or object.¹ (1) A local, physical, or ontological presence or object refers to something that exists apart from cognition (a specific act of cognition). As Lonergan notes, one can advert to the presence of one's face although one's face, as is, cannot be directly seen by one's eyes. Similarly too, with one's eyes, one cannot see one's eyes. (2) A second kind of a presence or object refers to something that is the terminus or term of a cognitional act (whether it is an act of sense or an act of reason). This is the kind of presence which exists if one sees one's face in a mirror.² One's face as seen in a mirror is experienced as an object, an external object. It exists cognitively as an other. It is other than one's act of cognition although it also exists as the term of one's cognitive act. (3) A third kind of presence or object refers to an experience of self-presence or self-awareness.³ This type of

¹*The Incarnate Word*, pp. 179-182. See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10, 3, 12 for how, within cognitive awareness or experience, he distinguishes between two different meanings for presence or object (although, in Lonergan's *The Incarnate Word* and "Christ as Subject: A Reply," *Collection*, p. 162, n. 11, the pertinent text in Augustine's *De Trinitate* is cited as 10, 9, 12).

²*De Trinitate*, 10, 3, 12.

³As Lonergan translates the wording of Augustine's discussion as this exists in the *De Trinitate*, 10, 9, 12 (cf. *The Incarnate Word*, p. 182):

But when it is said to the mind: 'Know yourself,' then it knows itself in the very act in which it understands the word 'yourself'; and it knows itself for no other reason than that it is present to itself.

In the discussion which one finds in Augustine, in the language or the conceptuality which one finds, nothing is said about consciousness. But, if one looks at Augustine's language where he speaks about remembering oneself (as in *memoria sui*), one finds a memory of self or a remembering of oneself which refers to an awareness of self that can be spoken about in terms which refer to consciousness and acts of consciousness. In consciousness, in consciousness which exists simply as a condition that is given, one has a primitive awareness of self that one may not often advert to or think about in the pursuit of one's life although, as soon as one begins to notice it and to advert to it or, in other words, as soon as we become conscious of our conscious selves and our conscious acts, our

experience refers to an implicit form of self-consciousness in a person who not only engages in certain acts but who also experientially knows at the same time that he or she is engaging in certain acts and not in other kinds of acts.⁴ In this species of consciousness, a person is aware of him or herself as a subject and what act happens to be operative in what a given subject is doing or receiving at any given time.⁵ Consciousness of self as a subject occurs through or “by reason of our acts.”⁶ In terms of objects, in the experience of any given act, two kinds of presence or two kinds of object can be distinguished: an object is made present to one's consciousness through one's act and the act itself exists as an inner object or datum of one's consciousness (a datum that one refers to in one's inner experience of self which is to be contrasted with outer kinds of experience which refer to things that are other than one's experience of self).⁷

consciousness shifts into a mode of apprehension which refers to self-consciousness. A consciousness that is now aware of itself refers to self-consciousness. In Augustine's *Confessions*, chapter 10, one finds a philosophy of memory which one can ponder and think about and which one can possibly transpose or translate into a philosophy of consciousness which uses a language which is more technical (a technical conceptuality) which can speak about the meanings that Augustine was referring to although in a manner which is now more precise. In the human soul, in the human psyche, one finds many different kinds of acts that are constitutive of it. Paraphrasing the kind of reasoning which one can find in Augustine (Laporte, p. 72):

[From one's] self-awareness...explicit and focused knowledge...emerges. From the background of an elusive presence to myself, I sometimes am able to conceive and pronounce a word which not only captures that awareness but which conduces to self-acceptance and integration. This process which leads from “remembering” oneself to “knowing” oneself serves as a model for the generation of the Second Person from the First. The resulting self-acceptance corresponds to the Spirit.

⁴See Aquinas in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 46, 6 which argues that a third kind of presence or object exists for human beings: a presence which exists as a pre-reflective knowing of self which refers to one's self-experience of one's consciousness. As Fred Crowe summarizes a meaning for consciousness that he gets from Lonergan's understanding of it (see *The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity*, p. 157): consciousness “is internal experience, strictly understood, of oneself and one's acts; it is not a reflection of one's prior acts, but is concomitant to all psychological acts; when I see an object, I am conscious of my seeing and of myself as seeing.” Lonergan's own words from the *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 156, give the following definition: *conscientia est sui suorumque actuum experientia stricte dicta atque interna* (“consciousness is interior experience of oneself and one's acts, where ‘experience’ is taken in the strict sense of the word”). Consciousness is known through itself and not through the mediation of any other act. This explains why Lonergan can say that “consciousness is known by consciousness.” Cf. *Incarnate Word*, p. 182; *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 159; pp. 161-163. “As light is seen in its own light, so too consciousness is known by consciousness.” Cf. *Incarnate Word*, p. 182. The awareness or the transparency which immediately exists in consciousness explains why it is not right to speak about having a “consciousness of consciousness” although it is true to say that “consciousness belongs to one who is conscious.” Cf. *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 249. In the self-consciousness which exists as a human subject attends to personal experiences of consciousness, consciousness exists as a preliminary datum that is being attended to and it also exists in the attending that happens when one attends to one's experience of consciousness. For this reason, Lonergan can argue that, in the context of introspective inquiry, “consciousness in one aspect is prior and in another aspect accompanies.” Cf. *Incarnate Word*, p. 185. In its acts, introspective inquiry consciously attends to one's conscious experience of acts which are also themselves conscious.

Please note, however, that being conscious differs from being self-conscious or aware of oneself in one's awareness although self-consciousness requires consciousness as a prior condition and prerequisite. One cannot be self-conscious without first being conscious. Being conscious simply refers to an awareness of self that has yet to be adverted to in any way. It exists before one attends to one's awareness in a shift that always heightens one's consciousness as one moves from mere consciousness or a mere awareness of self to a state of now being self-conscious. A favored example which Lonergan gives in *Insight* speaks about going down a flight of stairs when, for some unknown reason, one tries to take a lower step only to discover that one has already reached the floor. An awareness of misstep breaks into one's consciousness and one quickly becomes self-conscious. As Lonergan words his analysis of the change that occurs in one's awareness of self:

To be alive, then, is to be a more or less autonomous center of activity. It is to deal with a succession of changing situations; it is to do so promptly, efficaciously, economically; it is to attend continuously to the present, to learn perpetually from the past, to anticipate constantly the future. Thus the flow of sensations, as completed by memories and prolonged by imaginative acts of anticipation, becomes the flow of perceptions. It is of the latter, perceptual flow that we are conscious. It is only when the perceptual flow goes wrong that the mere sensation bursts into consciousness, as for example in the experience of trying to go down another step when already one has reached the floor.⁸

On the basis then of a difference that distinguishes self-consciousness from consciousness, one can specify a bit more clearly what is meant by consciousness (the state or condition of being conscious). In self-consciousness, the term or object of one's consciousness is also itself conscious. A conscious act here refers to a conscious subject or, as Lonergan at times speaks of it, a subject as a subject. But, in the second kind of presence that Augustine and Lonergan talks about, the object or term of one's consciousness is not itself also conscious.⁹ Yet, by acts which are conscious, every person is constituted as a subject, a conscious subject, although by acts that vary in nature and intensity.¹⁰ On the

⁵*Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 159.

⁶*Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 167. As Lonergan explains his position more thoroughly: it is not an act of sense that senses or an act of understanding that understands or an act of willing that wills but it is by means of these acts of sensing, understanding, and willing that a subjects senses, understands, and wills. All these acts, as conscious acts, are ordered to enhancing the conscious life of a subject (or, in other words, they are ordered to the life of a person where one's consciousness as a subject is something which is greater or which outstrips the degree of consciousness which belongs or exists in any particular given act of consciousness). Cf. p. 237. A person's consciousness is constituted by the different conscious acts which are operative in the life of a given person. Cf. p. 207; p. 213.

⁷*The Incarnate Word*, p. 185.

⁸*Insight*, p. 96.

⁹*The Incarnate Word*, p. 183.

¹⁰*Incarnate Word*, p. 190; p. 198. In dreams, for instance, a subject is conscious to some extent and, by having dreams, a person lives and exists as a dreaming subject. Things naturally change, however, when a person's consciousness shifts into full wakefulness. A subject becomes more present to one's self. One is more fully conscious. As sets of different acts lead to other different acts, conditions are created that lead to the emergence of other, later acts. A subject continually grows in its own consciousness by way of an inner or interior experience of itself which reveals what it does and

one hand, through consciousness (through the presence of a subject to him or herself), different acts are constituted.¹¹ But, on the other hand, by different conscious acts, a subject grows in consciousness. A subject is made conscious through participating or engaging in different acts of consciousness (different conscious acts) although the quality of one's consciousness will vary according to the presence or absence of any given conscious act and any combination which can exist among these acts.¹²

Through all its acts (as different as these can be), a person is to be identified as a subject. In such situations, whenever any conscious activity exists, a subject always ceases to be more than just a substance. As only a substance, one would be existing as a subject in only a potential or in an unrealized way. Where consciousness is absent, one would be less than a subject.

In the distinctions that Lonergan very carefully draws, an order of conscious intentionality is employed as a heuristic to speak about parts or elements and to note where certain relations exist. By a given conscious act, an object is made present to a subject and a subject is made present to itself in an implicit way. Lonergan explicitly speaks about an object that is made present “as *that which is intended*, the act is present as *that by which the object is intended*, [and] the subject is present as *that which intends*.”¹³ For instance, an act of understanding, as an act, makes present a specific object and this object refers to an idea or meaning. And similarly, an act of conceptualization which emerges or issues from a prior act of understanding makes a specific object present and this object refers to an inner word or concept. Through the intentionality which exists within our human cognition and by means of an order of intentionality which reveals a succession of acts and inner objects which exist as correlatives as these acts within our cognitive consciousness, the natural being [*esse naturale*] of something which is other than our knowing is approached and perhaps it is understood and known through the intentional being [*esse intentionale*] which exists as a consequence of our inquiring, cognitive consciousness. The intentional being of our mediating consciousness functions as a cognitive medium and so it is to be distinguished from the natural being of things which exist as other to our consciousness (even if accessible to the knowing which can exist in our human consciousness).¹⁴

what it is able to do. Through consciousness, a being or substance attains a grade of perfection which it would otherwise not have, a grade of perfection which, in turn, depends on what species of conscious act is being experienced at any given time or place. Cf. *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 187; Mackinnon, citing Lonergan, p. 132.

11Doran, “Commentary,” p. 12.

12 In the *Incarnate Word*, p. 183; p. 185, Lonergan speaks about inchoate consciousness, empirical consciousness, intellectual consciousness, rational consciousness, and self-consciousness which can also be identified as moral or responsible consciousness which exists in the context of moral deliberation when a person must decide what goods should be achieved and thus what kind of human being one should become. In this context, consciousness becomes conscience. Lonergan refers to these same distinctions in the *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, pp. 165-167; p. 187.

13*The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 141.

14See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 44, a. 3, ad 3; q. 56, a. 2, ad 3; 3a, *Supplementum*, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2 where Aquinas distinguishes between the natural being of a thing and the intended being of a thing as this exists within the cognition of a prospective human knower: *esse naturale* versus *esse intentionale*. The natural being of things exists before it is known or before it can be known through the intended being which exists in the goal of our striving as this exists in our intellectual and rational human consciousness. See also Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, p. 105; *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 565; Doran, “Commentary,” p. 44.

However, on the other hand, no object of any kind can be experienced or known if a subject is wholly lacking in any kind of consciousness which exists in the self-experience of a particular act. Through intentional consciousness, different things are known and, by means of this same consciousness, an order or world of real objects is mediated into the consciousness of a human subject. A world is mediated by meaning (by the acts of meaning which exist in the acts of understanding that are present in a human subject) and a world is also constituted or constructed by the acts of meaning (by the acts of understanding) which are present in the order of our intentional human consciousness (here now in this person and here now in this other person).¹⁵ From an understanding of our intentional human consciousness (which can be more or less profound), a base exists for understanding how acts of meaning or failures in acts of meaning have constituted the flow or the ups and downs of human

¹⁵Lonergan, "Time and Meaning," *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, eds. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 105; Doran, "Commentary," p. 61. Where, in his understanding of cognitive intentionality, Lonergan works with a distinction which Aquinas had drawn between the natural being of a thing and the intended being of a thing (specifically, in the order of human cognition, human beings seek to move toward a knowledge of things that exist apart from their having any conscious experience of them even if these same things can be known by human beings through acts of conscious human knowing), elsewhere, in other texts and contexts, Lonergan works with a distinction which is apparently taken from the hermeneutical philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey who had argued that a difference within meaning explains why a real distinction exists between the data of the natural sciences and the data of the human sciences. In the natural sciences, all meaning ensues as a consequence of later supposition and hypothesis and the possible reception of later acts of understanding which can evaluate the truth or the value of a proposed hypothesis. Cf. Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1971), p. 269. Meaning is ascribed to data as questions begin to arise about what is being experienced in the data which is simply given to one in one's acts of sense. However, in the human sciences, meaning is something which is already given as a datum (as a fundamental point of departure). One begins with meaning (one does not first move toward meaning) since, in the human world, meaning exists as a constitutive component. The human world exists because it has been constructed by acts of meaning (differing apprehensions of meaning which account for different decisions which persons make and which they put into effect in order to construct differing orders of human relations within a given social order). Cf. Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, p. 101 & n. 12; *Second Collection*, pp. 104-105. See also Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 689: "real being is that which is truly affirmed to exist, either that which exists or *that by which an existent being is constituted.*" Italics mine. From experiences of meaning that are already given in the data of sense and which are known for what they are as meanings, from these, in the human sciences, one can then engage in inquiries which can hopefully lead to richer experiences of meaning. Meanings which are already known become more fully understood and known.

Changes within meaning as these occur within a given culture effect changes in a given social order as new understandings and interpretations emerge to amend or to reject meanings which had been known through earlier acts of understanding and interpretation. Where contractions of meaning have occurred, lesser intelligibilities have replaced intelligibilities which are no longer understood and appreciated and, conversely, where expansions and growth in meaning has occurred, the explanation is a greater range or depth of understanding. Social orders are reconfigured as one dominant set of ideas is replaced by a new dominant set of ideas. Think, for instance, about changes in the meaning of marriage which have been occurring in western culture since the 17th Century. Instead of a set of meanings which is governed by a notion which believes that marriage is a sacrament which is blessed by God, many current understandings tend to think that marriage is largely an agreement about

history.

On a final note, when Lonergan speaks about a second shift that moves from self-consciousness to self-knowledge (which involves a further heightening of consciousness), he makes another key distinction. Where, in mere consciousness, a subject experiences him or herself implicitly and somewhat dimly, and then, in self-consciousness, a subject begins to experience him or herself explicitly *as an acting subject*, in self-knowledge and in moving toward self-knowledge, a subject begins to experience him or herself as an objectivized or thematized subject. In Lonergan's choice of words, the subject becomes present "as an object."¹⁶ The knowing present in self-reflection, which most naturally first expresses itself in inner words, is later expressed through an articulation that occurs in the outer words of

property and the rights which persons have with respect to property. In contracting a marriage, a civil contract is drawn up, agreed to, and signed by covenanting parties. Some changes in meaning can very gradually occur over a long period of time (meanings can evolve, one from another). But, at other times, changes in meaning can violently or suddenly occur (with scant expectation) and the result is a revolution: a revolutionary chain of events which encourages a new evaluation of past achievements and a rewriting of history.

The constitutive power of meaning accordingly explains why meaning can be properly referred to as a reality (as a cause, a formal cause: "a reason which" or "a reason by which" that, in turn, functions as a point of departure for bringing new forms of human cooperation into being which before had not existed). Cf. Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, p. 105. For the making of human things (a human world), meaning exists simply as the form for every kind of human organization. Meaning as form explains why a given form of human cooperation happens to exist (the form identifies a specific purpose). However, admittedly, since the meaning of a given form for a human order of relations can possess less intelligibility than the meaning of another possible form which could be applied in a given case or instance (to change an order of human relations or to reconfigure it from within), the possible truth or the possible validity of a constitutive human meaning is a variable which raises new questions. As a matter of course, we admit that a complete absence of any meaning is synonymous with saying that, in a given situation within the praxis of human affairs, no real form actually exists. If we think, for instance, about courts of law as these may exist in a police state, can one truly say that such things truly exist as courts of law? External judicial trappings might be evident in the appearances of things. But, if no meaning is present, if judicial procedures are being constantly flouted and transgressed, if justice does not exist as a rule or norm for how persons relate to each other, then one should speak about the presence of some other kind of human organization and the possible presence of some other kind of form or order of meaning which is being employed to constitute a given human organization (even as we may admit that a lack of meaning or a lack of intelligibility seems to exist in an alleged second form or second ordering of meaning). If the reality of a meaning is measured by its inherent rationality, then in one's judgments, one must speak about an absence of reality as this may exist with respect to some meanings that some persons live by (sometimes with choice and sometimes without much choice). On the one hand, a given meaning or interpretation can exist as a viewpoint which serves to organize how some persons should relate to others in some kind of communal context. But, on the other hand, some meanings can exist as myths. A right understanding of things does not fully or properly exist and, in the wake of inadequate understanding, other interpretations fill a void (interpretations which serve to give a purpose and a meaning to one's life). Without meaning, without some kind of meaning which refers to tasks and purposes for which one lives, one cannot have much of a life. Cf. Viktor E. Frankl, "Basic Concepts of Logotherapy," *The Feeling of Meaninglessness A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy*, ed. Alexander Batthyány (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), p. 61. One would live more as

language and speech and which thus serves to introduce further clarifications in one's self-understanding of things. Through the heightening of a person's subjectivity which thus occurs, a person's subjectivity is, in turn, enhanced and also changed in certain, unexpected ways. One's self-knowledge transforms oneself as a subject in a way which would not occur if one's knowing were limited to a kind that is fundamentally akin to knowing an object *as an object* since, in knowing an object as an object, an object is not itself changed by the knowing that is had of it (even if, to some extent, a knower is changed in some manner whenever it comes to a knowledge of something in the consciousness which it possesses).¹⁷ By adverting to the inner experience that one has of one's consciousness and through introspective self-reflection, the consequent awareness which results perhaps reveals the reality of the psychological subject for the first time (a psychological subject as opposed to other kinds of subject).¹⁸ From a deepening awareness of self, a person is taken and turned into a psychological subject. Subject in potency becomes subject in act.¹⁹

When speaking about being **within consciousness**, Lonergan admits that he is speaking about the same thing that one can speak about if one chooses to speak in ontological or metaphysical terms. Consciousness exists as a reality in human life. It is something which definitely is. As existing, it is

animals do than as a human being. But, on the other hand, if some kind of meaning does exist in the context of one's life (however incomplete or inadequate is perhaps this meaning), an initial experience of meaning does serve as a point of departure for new apprehensions of meaning which, if known and accepted, can enhance the quality of one's life and the better functioning of relations which can exist among persons forming communities of one kind or another. In the presence of mythic consciousness meanings about. They exist as realities. But, if the truth of a meaning is also known, if it can be rationally affirmed, how greater is the reality which comes to exist within a meaning.

16*The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 141. In the *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, pp. 175-179, see how Lonergan discusses the shift which occurs as, through introspective self-knowledge, one moves from an experience of one's self as a subject (engaged in different acts here this and now that) toward a knowledge that is mediated through acts of self-understanding, conceptualization, and judgment. The mediation transcends one's simple experience of self which exists as an unstructured, undifferentiated experience of self since, through inquiries which lead to acts of understanding, conceptualization, and judgment, one can discover distinctions which can convert one's immediate experience of self into an experience of self which is transcended (an experience of self that is grounded in one's experience of self but which allows one to say in a communicable, public way that this is not the same as that). In the kind of language which Lonergan uses, we can only properly speak of objects if we speak about the terms or correlatives which are proper to acts of sensing, conceptualizing, and judging. Cf. *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 179. Inner experience can never refer to anything which is known or which is referred to as an object. Inner experience always directly refers to the subjectivity of a given person and to any given act which is operative with respect to a person's subjectivity.

17*Incarinate Word*, pp. 183-184, p. 198. See also Lonergan, *Collection*, "Christ as Subject: A Reply," p. 165.

18Lonergan distinguishes other kinds of subject which should not be confused with what is meant when we speak about a psychological subject. In these other instances, a noun is the subject of a verb. God is the subject of theology or matter in motion is the subject of physics. Matter is the subject of form in metaphysics as the recipient of form. In the same way also, "substance is the subject of accidents." In the kind of language which one finds in Aquinas, if something is the subject of something else, it exists or functions as a passive principle. It is the recipient of an action and not the doer of an action. Cf. *Incarinate Word*, p. 183.

19*Incarinate Word*, p. 183.

part of being, the being of everything that exists. However, given its variability, it is something that also comes and goes in a person's life. It grows or diminishes depending on what one is doing and it can sometimes disappear if a person ceases to be the subject of any acts. Lonergan refers to dreamless sleep as a time when a person exists more as a substance than as a subject.²⁰ Hence, to the degree that a person is more fully conscious now at one time instead of another, it can be said by the same degree that a person is more fully alive. Consciousness is to be correlated with being more fully human. To the degree thus that a person is more fully conscious, a person as a subject becomes more fully present to him or herself. Hence, if God is pure actuality, pure activity, or pure act (*actus purus*), nobody can be said to be more fully conscious than God. God's consciousness is perfect. God's presence to himself outstrips any kind of self-presence which other beings might have. In the Trinitarian self-presence which God has of himself, as a divine inner Word proceeds within God's consciousness or awareness, God is present to himself as *intellectum in intelligere* (what is understood in his understanding) and as divine Love also proceeds within God's consciousness, God is present to himself as *amatum in amante* (what is loved in his loving).²¹ Hence, with respect to these considerations, it can be said that a being having consciousness is more perfect than a being lacking in consciousness. These considerations explain why Lonergan speaks of consciousness as a perfection. It exists as a "grade of ontological perfection."²² It is better to have it than not to have it.

The coming and going of consciousness in turn explains why, in metaphysical terms, it is referred to as an *accident*. It is a property that comes and goes while the subject or thing to which it refers to or inheres in remains substantially the same (not losing its identity: its self-identity).²³ Acts of understanding, for example, come and go and so, acts of understanding exist as *proper accidents* when they refer to human beings.²⁴ It is typical and proper for human beings that they should have acts of

²⁰*Incarinate Word*, p. 190.

²¹Wilkins, *Method, Order, and Analogy in Trinitarian Theology*, p. 33, citing Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 27, a. 3; *Compendium theologiae*, c. 45.

²²*Method in Theology*, pp. 7-8. Cf. *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 199: "conscious' adds nothing to being but simply expresses more explicitly the perfection of a being." One can say that some things exist without consciousness; other things exist with intermittent experiences of consciousness; and lastly, other kinds of thing exist with a consciousness that is always in effect.

²³For an introductory understanding about how or why it is possible to speak about the principle of permanence within change (self-identity within change), see how W. Norris Clarke speaks about the meaning of substance in his *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 123-130.

²⁴For a more technical definition or meaning for accident, one can refer to an account that Stebbins provides (p. 38) where he cites Lonergan to the effect that a meaning for accident can only be understood if it is grasped in connection with an understanding that grasps what substance is. Where substance can be used to refer to a subject or thing that exists in itself, accident refers to that which exists only with reference to something else (the something else being a substance). It is traditionally said that accidents exist within substances. One might refer to them as "non-essential modifications" of a substance in order to distinguish them from modifications which refer to changes of substance as one kind of substance is succeeded by another kind of substance. Cf. Clarke, p.128. As Stebbins, p. 38, cites an explanation which Lonergan gives in *Verbum*, p. 24:

.....substance alone is a *quid* [a 'what'] without qualification; accidents, too, are instances of *quid*, but only after a fashion, for their intelligibility is not merely what they are, but also includes an added

understanding (as it is also typical for them to have acts of sense which work with acts of the mind through inquiry to create conditions which best lead to the probable reception of acts of understanding).

relation to their subject; and this difference in their intelligibility and essence involves a generically different *modus essendi* [mode of being].

Stebbins cautions that “‘accident’ should not be taken to suggest the merely incidental.” Proper accidents need to be distinguished also as a distinct classification since these, according to Lonergan, refer to “properties that a being has because of what it is; these are, after their own fashion, ‘essential’ aspects of a being.” If curiosity is proper for a human being (human beings naturally ask questions and no other kind of being asks questions, then the asking of questions can be properly regarded as a proper accident. The asking of questions comes and goes and, at the same time, this asking of questions exists as a proper accident.