

# PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AS A CATEGORY FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: INTIMATIONS FROM NEWMAN AND LONERGAN

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In considering the nature of theology, theologians have commonly appealed to the well-known maxim of Saint Anselm, *fides quaerens intellectum*, and in so doing they have generally agreed that the principal goal of theology is to foster understanding. In addition, most theologians would readily admit that understanding must be achieved on 'the level of one's time.'<sup>1</sup> This is to say that one should strive to answer the challenging questions of one's own era, the questions that emerge from the context in which one is situated. In recent decades, the world-cultural context has become increasingly influenced by an awareness of religious plurality and the problems that issue from it.<sup>2</sup> In this context, one of the questions that continues to challenge theologians is: How can religious plurality be dealt with so that persons committed to different traditions can live in a manner characterized by sensitivity, understanding, and respect? To be sure, peaceful-coexistence does not imply negating or radically minimizing the very real differences that constitute plurality. Rather, it is a question of seeking to balance or temper difference with some type of commonality that both spans and respects religious borders. In this essay I will explore the notion of religious experience and consider its viability as a category for inter-religious dialogue, and as such, one that might provide a thematic foundation and normative guide for actual conversations among persons of different religious traditions who are willing to learn from one another by sharing their stories of faith and values.<sup>3</sup>

I shall construct my proposal by appealing to the insights of two theologians who are widely regarded as having made significant and varied contributions to the development of Roman Catholic theology, namely, John Henry Newman and Bernard Lonergan. My choice of these two thinkers has been influenced by their ability to interpret each other, by which I mean that the thought of one is helpful in understanding the thought of the other. As I shall explain, both Newman and Lonergan understood religious experience as an intelligible and universal reality that transcends the particularities of diverse religious traditions by being grounded in a common anthropological basis.<sup>4</sup> The essay will be structured in the following way. Referring to the Second Vatican Council and *Nostra Aetate*, I will begin by highlighting inter-religious dialogue as a necessary task for contemporary Catholics living their faith in a religiously plural context; in this step I shall pay special attention to the so-called 'turn to the subject.' I will then examine Newman's and Lonergan's understanding of religious experience, respectively. Finally, I will

conclude with some remarks regarding the implications of their insights for the practice of inter-religious dialogue in the contemporary context.

## 2. THE TASK OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

In the immediate aftermath of the atrocities of the Second World War, most notably the catastrophe known as the *Shoah*, the Roman Catholic Church recognized the need to work towards constructing relationships of understanding and peace with Judaism as well as with other religions.<sup>5</sup> While the history of the Catholic Church's relationship to the religions is certainly checkered, the Second Vatican Council opened up the possibility of a new stage of relationship.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, marked the first time that the Catholic Church made an official pronouncement dedicated to the religions.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, *Nostra Aetate* clearly encouraged a new attitude in their regard in the sense that it was willing to recognize their positive contributions to humanity's religious quest.<sup>8</sup>

This new attitude finds clear expression in the first section of the declaration, which states that men and women, regardless of religious creed, strive to answer the 'obscure riddles of the human condition.'<sup>9</sup> The document goes on to affirm that religion has a significant role to play in humanity's attempt to answer such questions. In addition, it portrays 'the religions associated with the development of civilization' as sources of 'more refined ideas and more highly developed language' that assist people in their efforts to come to terms with fundamental questions dealing with the nature and meaning of human existence, as well as the existence of the cosmos.<sup>10</sup>

According to *Nostra Aetate*, men and women resort to 'language' and 'ideas' in order to make sense of themselves and the world of which they are part. That is to say, they develop 'categories' that allow them to structure their experience of their existence in the world.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it states that such terms are provided by religious traditions. Hence, the following question: 'Is there a category that could be appealed to in humanity's quest to answer the "big" questions of life and could such a category serve to facilitate dialogue among persons committed to different traditions?' While *Nostra Aetate* does not provide an answer to this question, it certainly invites one.

## 3. POSTMODERNITY AND 'THE TURN TO THE SUBJECT'

More than forty years have elapsed since the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* and the close of the Second Vatican Council, and during that time the world has witnessed the rise of an era that is often tagged as postmodern. To be sure, the meaning of this term is often a source of confusion and debate. At times, it seems that every person who invokes the term means something different, which ultimately makes it difficult, if not impossible, to use it in any meaningful way. In this section I shall elucidate the meaning of this term by explaining some of its key features. As the essay moves forward it will become clear that it is precisely these features that allow the notion of religious experience to be used meaningfully in a postmodern context.

In speaking of postmodernity, I am referring to a mode of cultural sensibility or consciousness in which many of the features of modernity have been critiqued and radicalized, yet continue to exert significant influence in the realm of human culture.<sup>12</sup> One such feature is the so-called 'turn to the subject.' This 'turn' is characterized by the acknowledgment that every

human being is given the challenging and potentially rewarding task of constructing her own personal identity by making choices from a selection of possibilities.<sup>13</sup> The postmodern radicalization of the turn to the subject is marked by a vast plurality of options for an increasing number of people.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, these options are no longer tied to traditional ideas or values associated with class, culture or religion, thereby giving rise to a process of detraditionalisation.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, this process has, to some extent, allowed previously marginalized groups (e.g., women and social and sexual minorities) to have a greater voice in the public arena and has made some contribution to racial and sexual equality, among other things. At the same time, it has also occasioned a general crisis in the sense that people no longer categorically rely upon particular traditions to tell them what they are to do and who they are to be. While they may certainly have recourse to the resources of traditions, in the end they must freely and responsibly decide for themselves.

In order to deepen our understanding of the modern turn to the subject and its postmodern developments, it will be helpful to briefly reflect on some pre-modern understandings of human being. In an article in which he considered the chief features of postmodernity, as they are evident in philosophy and theology, Frederick Lawrence observed that pre-modern thinkers, most notably Aristotle in *On the Soul*, reflected upon human beings from the standpoint of substance and did not speak explicitly about consciousness in its dynamisms and structures.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, modern thinkers, such as Locke, Descartes, Hobbes, Hume, and Kant reflected on human beings from the standpoint of consciousness and therefore from the standpoint of the conscious subject.<sup>17</sup> Lawrence, however, has charged these modern thinkers with making the significant mistake of equating consciousness with one type of operation, namely, perception. By perception Lawrence means, 'the act of explicit awareness, or of express advertence to whatever it may be' that is out there to be perceived.<sup>18</sup> In the end, this misunderstanding of consciousness inevitably objectifies what it is aware of. As a corrective to this misunderstanding, Lawrence proposes that consciousness, properly understood, is a range of awareness that includes both a foreground and a background dimension. The foreground dimension is the explicit awareness of perceivable objects. The equally important background dimension is, as he says, 'the most radical presence of ourselves to ourselves – that can never be made explicit exhaustively.'<sup>19</sup> While I shall dwell further on the meaning and implications of this claim later in this essay, at present I would simply like to point out that the main problem generated by the misunderstanding of consciousness as perception is that the tacit, background dimension of the subject tends to be slighted and at worst, entirely neglected.

When an understanding of consciousness as perception is operative in the realm of religion there is an exaggerated and imbalanced focus on the religious object. While the meaning of the word 'religion' is itself a matter of debate, I propose the one put forward by Paul Tillich in *Dynamics of Faith*. Tillich described faith as a state of being ultimately concerned that promises complete fulfillment.<sup>20</sup> Religion, then, provides a context where faith is concretely manifest through the doctrines and practices that function as normative guides in one's surrender to the content of concern.<sup>21</sup> The so-called religious object is precisely this 'content of concern' or, to use a more explicitly theological category, the content of 'faith' that one recognizes and submits to as ultimate, even to the point of personal sacrifice.<sup>22</sup> Given the vast diversity of organized forms of religious life, there is a concomitant diversity of religious objects. One of the examples offered by Tillich is YHWH as the content of concern/religious object of, as he says, 'every pious Jew.'<sup>23</sup> The ultimacy of YHWH as the God of the universe is revealed by the great commandment to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' (Deut 6:5).<sup>24</sup> Though Tillich does not mention it, we could add that the great commandment is fulfilled by adhering to the further commandments of the Hebrew Scriptures

that provide ritualistic and ethical prescriptions.<sup>25</sup> Understood in this light, religion is a profoundly ethical affair in the sense that submission to the concern necessitates concrete ways of living. Thus, the religious person does not simply reflect on the content of her concern, but she necessarily acts in certain ways that are expressive of it.

While attention to the religious object is crucial to any discussion of religion and religious experience, it ought not to detract entirely from attention to the subject as the locus of consciousness. Newman and Lonergan are two thinkers who have addressed the risk of 'over objectification' by reflecting in earnest on the significance of the religious subject. We will move forward by considering their contributions to the discussion.

#### 4. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN (1801–1890)

John Henry Newman lived in an era in which neo-Scholasticism set the standard for orthodox Catholic theology. The neo-Scholasticism of the nineteenth-century relied on a strict appeal to deductive, formal logic based on the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>26</sup> The instruments employed to guide this appeal were the manuals of theology that sought to lay out, in demonstrative fashion, the truths of faith.<sup>27</sup> This style of inquiry stood in stark contrast to the empiricist tradition and its appeal to the experientially-based insight with which Newman felt much more at home. One way in which Newman clearly acknowledged his discomfort with neo-Scholasticism was by disclaiming the title of theologian.<sup>28</sup> Another, perhaps more significant, way in which he distanced himself from it was through his use of empirical method, most notably in his *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent* (1870). In this regard, Gerard Hughes remarked that 'A *Grammar of Assent* sets out to break away from the assumption that epistemology requires all arguments aimed at establishing truth to be modelled on the arguments of formal logic.'<sup>29</sup> According to J.M. Cameron, one of the consequences of Newman's use of this model is that he begins from what is within, namely, the impression of the object of faith as it is apprehended by the believing subject. Cameron admits that while the terminology of 'within and without' generates difficulties, it is valuable for its ability to point up the importance of the 'knowing' subject.<sup>30</sup> This is especially true in the realm of religious discourse in which anything that is expressed or stated about the object of faith 'is necessarily bound by the subjectivity of the believer.'<sup>31</sup> Our efforts to understand Newman's empirical sympathies and their implications for his theological work will begin by reviewing his understanding of subjectivity. In so doing, the anthropological perspective that allows Newman to make claims regarding the human dimension of religious experience (as the experience of conscience) will be brought to light.

##### 4.1 Newman on the Subject

While Newman's familiarity with the empirical tradition led him to acknowledge the importance of subjectivity in a general manner, he also explicitly recognized his own subjectivity in radically personal fashion. Indeed, one of the phrases for which he is best known appears in the opening pages of the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) in which he expresses his early conviction (following his 1816 conversion to a moderate Evangelicalism) that, for him, there were 'two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator.'<sup>32</sup> Towards the end of the *Apologia* he echoes this conviction saying, '... and if I am asked why I believe in a God, I answer that it is because I believe in myself, for I feel it impossible to believe in my own existence (and of that fact I am quite sure) without believing also in the existence of Him, who lives as a Personal, All-seeing, All-judging Being in my conscience.'<sup>33</sup> At the risk of belaboring the point, but with the intent of pointing up his insistence on the truth of his own existence, we

can recall one of Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons* of 1839 in which he affirms the following: 'We are conscious we are alive, and are rational; each man has his own thought, feelings, and desires; each man is one to himself, and knows himself to be one and indivisible; – one in such sense, that while he exists, it were an absurdity to suppose he can be other than himself . . .'<sup>34</sup> This quotation elucidates the point that the subject is conscious through her operations, for example, she thinks, she feels, and she desires; hence, it is through the performance of operations that she is rendered conscious and, of course, self-conscious.

We must not overlook the fact that Newman connects the affirmation of the believing subject (myself) with the affirmation of the object of belief (my Creator). Thus, the object of belief and the believing subject are bound to one another in such a way that they can be distinguished but not separated. In contemporary philosophical parlance we might say that he was attempting to hold together a metaphysics of the object with a phenomenology of the subject. This, of course, begs the question as to how these two realities are held together. For Newman, the tie that binds the believing subject with its object is conscience. Therefore, we will continue our investigation by reflecting on Newman's understanding of conscience as an experience through which one comes to know oneself as a conscious subject in relation to God.

#### 4.2 *The Experience of Conscience*

In beginning this section, it must be said that Newman accords the conviction that 'Every man [sic] has' a conscience the status of a first principle, that is, an unproved proposition that serves as a starting point for reasonable and meaningful discourse, and without which, such discourse is impossible.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Newman succinctly states, 'We have by nature a conscience.'<sup>36</sup> For Newman, conscience is a natural phenomenon and as such, an essential and constitutive part of being human.<sup>37</sup> Just as we cannot get along (or at least would get along significantly poorer) without memory, sensation and reasoning, neither can we get along well without conscience.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Newman maintains that the experience of conscience puts paid to elitist tendencies, for it is a universal phenomenon that is found in all classes and conditions of men and women.<sup>39</sup>

Newman describes conscience as an inner, mental act that produces (in us) a sense or 'feeling' of right and wrong (which is not to suggest that conscience is an infallible guide in matters of right and wrong).<sup>40</sup> In this way, conscience is a sanction or principle of conduct that encourages us to do what is right and avoid what is wrong.<sup>41</sup> The experiential dimension of conscience is significant because it points up its relationship to the emotions. In Newman's view, emotion is an irreducible dimension of the experience of conscience, hence, he was able to say, 'It [conscience] is always emotional.'<sup>42</sup> Thus, in the measure that we do what is good, our conscience is also good, while when we do what is bad, our conscience is burdened and uneasy. As with other mental acts, acts of conscience render us conscious of ourselves as subjects. For example, when we remember a past event through an act of memory we become conscious of ourselves as historical beings existing in space and time. In a similar manner, when, by an act of conscience, we 'sense' that a certain course of action is either right or wrong, we become conscious of ourselves as moral beings. Recalling Newman's celebrated phrase, we could say that through the experience of conscience the subject is rendered absolute and luminously self-evident in the sense that the reality of one's existence is rendered undeniable. Terrence Merrigan addressed this point saying, 'Newman can write that it is as legitimate to say "Sentio ergo sum," or "Conscientiam habeo, ergo sum," as it is to say "Cogito ergo sum."'<sup>43</sup>

We must not forget that, for Newman, there are two absolute and luminously self-evident beings, and the 'second' of these is God.<sup>44</sup> To be sure, the recognition, and indeed knowledge of God as a living and intelligent Being is implicit in the experience of conscience.<sup>45</sup> Newman

expresses this conviction as follows, 'It [conscience] always implies . . . the recognition of a living object, towards which it is directed.'<sup>46</sup> He elaborates upon this saying that, because God is not visible, 'The Object to which [the subject's] perception is directed must be Supernatural and Divine.'<sup>47</sup> He concludes his argument by stating that, 'the phenomena of Conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just powerful, all-seeing, retributive, and is the creative principle of religion . . .'<sup>48</sup> The upshot of this line of thought is that through conscience we become aware of the reality of the Object such that God becomes a 'fact', that is, a real and living presence, apprehended in the imagination.<sup>49</sup> As Merrigan explains, '*Real apprehension* occurs when religious doctrines are "regarded" as referring to "some-thing" which can be experienced.'<sup>50</sup> Jan Walgrave pointed out that Newman equated such 'imaginative awareness' with knowledge.<sup>51</sup> More specifically, in this context it is knowledge of God, which, one could say is a particular type of theistic knowledge because it is knowledge of a personal God. It should be clear that such knowledge is not immediate or some sort of private revelation, rather it is mediated by, and even dependent upon, the experience of conscience. Hence, I believe it is true to Newman to affirm that religious experience is in fact the experience of conscience. Furthermore, as the experience of conscience is at once natural and universal, so too is religious experience, and by extension, religious knowledge. Thus, it is indeed possible to speak of natural religious experience as well as natural knowledge of a Supernatural reality, i.e., God. We can now expand upon 'Conscientiam habeo, ergo sum' to include 'Conscientiam habeo, ergo Deus est.'<sup>52</sup>

### 4.3 *Conscience and Human Responsibility*

Newman's description of God in the *Grammar* as a 'Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, [and] retributive' who 'ordains that the offender should suffer for his offence' resonates with a similar idea in *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833).<sup>53</sup> In *The Arians* Newman reflects on the universal power and presence of an invisible God whose moral law and governance make themselves felt in all human hearts via 'the obligation of duty, and the certainty of a just judgment, and of reward and punishment . . .'<sup>54</sup> To be sure, Newman was not suggesting that God doles out material rewards and punishment such that those who do good are handsomely rewarded while those who do bad are severely punished. The facts of life clearly attest to the contrary. Rather, his point was that the sense of right and wrong makes itself felt internally, that is, within subjectivity. However, this sense is far from being a purely internal phenomena, for it is capable of moving us to action. In this way, conscience has a claim on our existence in that it elicits specific courses of action; otherwise stated, conscience calls forth human responsibility and therefore has a distinctly moral dimension. Newman makes this point by highlighting the sense of obligation to choose between that which is good and that which is bad, and the anticipation of future judgment with regard to our choices and actions.<sup>55</sup>

In considering Newman's claim that conscience impels us towards right action we might be led to reason that he advocates a move from the subject as the locus of conscience towards a more exclusive focus on the object to whom the actions are directed. Is this in fact the case? Does Newman really use the subject in order to get to and prioritize the object(s), whether it is God or our fellow human being(s)? The evidence available in the *Grammar of Assent* suggests that he does not. Newman speaks directly to this concern saying, 'conscience . . . is concerned with persons primarily, and with actions mainly as viewed in their doers, or rather with self alone and one's own actions, and with others only indirectly and as if in association with self.'<sup>56</sup> In this light, we can correctly judge the nature of human responsibility to be, first and foremost, a responsibility for oneself – and as I shall highlight below, a responsibility for oneself in relation to God. By this I mean that the subject is called to act in a manner that is coherent with

her internal, and indeed intimate experience of conscience. At the same time, we would be mistaken in thinking that the subjective responsibility inspired by conscience is completed turned in on itself and as such, a source of egoism and/or self-satisfaction. Newman is careful to balance his insight into the subjective nature of responsibility by adding the caveat, 'It [conscience] does not repose on itself, but vaguely reaches forward to something beyond self, and dimly discerns a sanction higher than self for its decisions . . .'<sup>57</sup> Newman simply confirms the view that the experience of conscience is, by nature, relational in the sense that it is ultimately oriented to the recognition of one's Creator and one's duty toward Him and others.

## 5. BERNARD LONERGAN (1904–1984)

Unlike John Henry Newman, Bernard Lonergan witnessed the passing of neo-Scholasticism as the official standard for Catholic theological orthodoxy. The Second Vatican Council was a watershed in the sense that it opened the doors for Catholic theologians to understand and develop theology as a science that relativized the priority of logic by means of an appeal to empirical method. In the main, Lonergan's post-conciliar work clearly testifies to the fact that he, like Newman, was sympathetic to the empirical tradition and its 'turn to the subject'. Moreover, Lonergan sought to positively exploit this concern as a means of engaging the modern era and thereby assist the Catholic Church to mount to the level of her time. We will now turn to this concern with a view towards drawing out its connection to the theme of religious experience.

### 5.1 *Lonergan on the Subject*

Mention has already been made of Frederick Lawrence's critique of the limited and limiting understanding of consciousness-as-perception that objectifies that which it is aware of, as well as of Lawrence's corrective claim that consciousness is properly understood as a range of states of awareness with both foreground and background dimensions. Here, I would like to return to Lawrence's proposal by closely following his appeal to Lonergan's thoughts on the matter. It shall become clear that an understanding, or misunderstanding, of consciousness has significant and wide-ranging implications for an understanding of the subject as well as for the notion of religious experience.

First, it is important to note that neither Lawrence nor Lonergan reject the claim that consciousness includes perception. They do, however, resist a strict equation of consciousness with perception on the basis that it overlooks the 'background' dimension of consciousness that can never be completely objectified. In support of his argument, Lawrence refers to Lonergan's essay '*Existenz and Aggiornamento*' in which conscious being is described as the being of the subject. Lonergan explains this description as follows, 'Conscious being is not an object, not part of the spectacle we contemplate, but the presence to himself of the spectator, the contemplator. It is not an object of introspection, but the prior presence that makes introspection possible.'<sup>58</sup> This explanation is complemented in the essay, 'Cognitional Structure,' in which he offers further insight into the being of the subject as subject, so to speak. There we read, 'Objects are present by being attended to; but subjects are present as subjects, not by being attended to, but by attending . . . they have to be present to themselves for anything to be present to them . . .'<sup>59</sup> In a recent article, Matthew Petillo succinctly captured this point by describing the subject as subject as a 'pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual self-presence that accompanies all activities.'<sup>60</sup> The shift in focus from the foreground to the background dimension is intended to bring the two dimensions into greater equilibrium by paying due attention to the fact that, as

subjects, we will never know ourselves completely; in this life, knowledge of oneself never achieves the status of a *fait accompli*.<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that the task of knowing oneself should be abandoned. Rather it is to affirm that one should go about accomplishing this task with a sense of humility and with the realization that there will forever be something more to be discovered, an unknown to be made known.

## 5.2 *The Self-Transcendent Subject*

In recognizing that there is always, at least during our earthly existence, an unknown dimension of the subject, we are led to consider the notion of transcendence, and indeed of self-transcendence. To be sure, this notion is a crucial component of the universalist view of religious experience that is being presented here. In a very general sense, transcendence means going beyond. In a more precise manner, it means going beyond the unknown by making it known. Thus, we can say that transcendence is a process by which the unknown is transformed into the known. Self-transcendence, then, is a process of self-transformation in which the subject moves from ignorance to knowledge, and ultimately, from knowledge to action such that her knowing is consistent with her doing – I shall reflect further on this below. At the most basic level, the process of self-transcendence is inspired by the natural desire to know.<sup>62</sup> In this regard, Lonergan expressed his agreement with Aristotle that this desire is universal because it naturally arises in all human beings.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, for Lonergan, the universal desire to know is differentiated and expressed by the so-called transcendentals, which make questions and answers concerning the unknown possible. He identified the transcendentals as intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility, and he offered the following explanation to elucidate their meaning:

... Intelligence takes us beyond experiencing to ask what and why and how and what for. Reasonableness takes us beyond the answers of intelligence to ask whether the answers are true and whether what they mean really is so. Responsibility goes beyond fact and desire and possibility to discern between what truly is good and what only apparently is good.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, the self-transcendent subject is, at best, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. To be sure, the process of self-transcendence and the knowledge that it engenders do not simply concern objects external to the subject. On the contrary, it also provides one with knowledge of oneself and in this way contributes to the ongoing and lifelong project of becoming an autonomous subject, that is, a person who gradually becomes oneself via her own conscious, transcendental intending.<sup>65</sup>

### 5.2.1 *Self-Transcendence and Critical Realism*

Before we begin the discussion of the nature and function of self-transcendence it is necessary to acknowledge a crucial philosophical presupposition that supports Lonergan's understanding of religious experience. This presupposition is the philosophical stance known as critical realism and Lonergan deemed it to be so fundamental that he referred to its appropriation as an event of cognitional self-transcendence or otherwise stated, intellectual conversion, which he defined as 'a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge.'<sup>66</sup> Thus, critical realism provides uniquely correct answers to three fundamental philosophical questions: 'What am I doing when I am knowing?', 'Why is doing that knowing?', and 'What do I know when I do it?' Lonergan labeled these questions as questions of cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics, respectively.<sup>67</sup>

For the critical realist, knowing is the result of three different activities that occur on three corresponding levels of consciousness. Specifically, when one is knowing, one is: (i) experiencing on the level of attentiveness, (ii) understanding on the level of intelligence, and (iii) judging on the level of reasonableness. On the basis of this cognitional theory one can go on to the question of its epistemic validity and objectivity. The critical realist maintains that her cognitional theory does indeed issue in valid and objective knowledge in view of the fact that to affirm otherwise is paramount to admitting that one is a 'nonresponsible, nonreasonable, nonintelligent somnambulist.'<sup>68</sup> Finally, the critical realist holds that affirming oneself as attentive, intelligent and reasonable is identical to knowing being, and that knowing being is an instance of knowing reality. As summarized by Michael Vertin, 'The reality proportionate to human knowing is a compound of the experienceable, the intelligible, and the affirmable.'<sup>69</sup> By way of conclusion, through critical realism one arrives at an explicit metaphysics by which one affirms genuine knowledge of reality, including an affirmation of oneself as a knower.<sup>70</sup>

### 5.3 *Self-Transcendence, Religious Experience and Grace*

Based upon the philosophical stance of critical realism Lonergan was able to develop an understanding of religious experience as a type of transcendental experience. In *Method in Theology*, he stated that the capacity for self-transcendence is actualized when one falls in love.<sup>71</sup> He went on to say that falling in love occasions a state of being in love and, borrowing a term from Newman, said that such a state constitutes a 'first principle' that determines one's desires, fears, joys, sorrows, discernment of values, decisions, and deeds.<sup>72</sup> Hence, we could say that being in love is not only an actualizing, but also an orienting principle that points one in a particular direction. Recalling the process of self-transcendence, we could also specify that the direction taken is towards the intelligible, the true, and the good. Furthermore, it is important to note that Lonergan makes absolutely no suggestion that the state of being in love is restricted to any particular person or group. Indeed, as a 'first principle' it is a universal phenomenon and, like the experience of conscience, it is available to all men and women. Hence, everyone is capable of becoming a being-in-love and thereby participating in the process of self-transcendence by striving to be intelligent, reasonable, and responsible.

Lonergan acknowledged different kinds of being in love including spousal love, filial love, fraternal love, and love of one's nation.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, he called upon his own tradition to designate being in love with God as distinctly religious experience, which he described as 'being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations.'<sup>74</sup> He appealed to Saint Paul to describe it as a 'conscious dynamic state of love, joy, peace, that manifests itself in acts of kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5, 22).'<sup>75</sup> The crucial difference between being in love with one's spouse, child, sibling or any other creature, and being in love with God is that the latter constitutes the fulfillment of the capacity for self-transcendence.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the uniqueness of religious experience is that it supplies the condition of possibility for the fullest or ultimate realization of self-transcendence. Here, we must not overlook the fact that such fullness entails actions by means of which experience, understanding and judgment find concrete expression. This is to say that as self-transcendent beings, humans necessarily act, that is, they behave in certain ways and do certain things in function of what they have experienced, understood, and judged to be true and good.

Following Lonergan, in speaking of the fullness of self-transcendence as the fruit of being in love with God we are led to consider the notion of grace, admittedly, a very particular notion. Clearly, the scope of this paper does not allow an extensive analysis of Lonergan's theology of grace and its relationship to religious experience.<sup>77</sup> At present, it suffices to point out that

Loneran does indeed connect religious experience and grace. In fact, the connection is made rather plainly and simply when he states that religious experience is not something that humans produce, choose, or, in the first place, know. It is not, ‘the product of our knowing and choosing.’<sup>78</sup> Rather, religious experience is a gift, and more specifically, it is *the* gift of God’s love.<sup>79</sup> In the metaphysical categories of a scholastic and theoretical theology this gift was referred to as sanctifying grace and denoted an entitative habit rooted in the essence of the soul.<sup>80</sup> In a more contemporary, ‘methodical theology’, such as the one proposed by Lonergan, it is more aptly associated with the dynamic state of being in love with God. Regardless of the categories one chooses to cast one’s understanding of grace, it remains necessary for one to achieve the fullness of self-transcendence. Hence, Lonergan’s analysis affirms the twofold Christian conviction that (i) we cannot save ourselves and (ii) we can count on God to bestow God’s grace. Ultimately, our transformation from inattentive, unintelligent, irrational and irresponsible beings towards persons who are attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible is principally the work of God. Once again we are brought to the issue of humility, for while we certainly have a role to play in our own subjective development, that role ought to be taken up in light of the knowledge that that we do not, and indeed cannot, labor alone.

It must be acknowledged that to invoke the notion of grace to describe religious experience as an event of grace creates a Christian category that could be perceived as being *irreducibly* particularist. Attempts have certainly been made to develop what might be considered as a more universalist understanding of religious experience that is far more reticent to rely on explicitly Christian categories. Most notably, John Hick (1922–2012) developed a so-called theology of religious pluralism in which religious experience is generally conceived of as a common experience of what he terms as ‘the Real.’<sup>81</sup> As it is well known, Hick’s universalist ‘pretensions’ have been the object of much critical work. For example, Mark Heim charged Hick with contradicting his own pluralistic hypothesis by positing an eschatological vision that drains religious experience of any real cognitive content.<sup>82</sup> The point at stake is that if religious experience is to be used in any meaningful fashion it must acknowledge some degree of indebtedness to the religious traditions in which it concretely emerges and is sustained. To speak of religious experience as an event of grace is to make such an acknowledgment. However, adopting a particular theological perspective does not render the basic category (religious experience) exclusively Christian. Rather, it does justice to how it has been classically understood in one tradition so that meaningful comparisons might be made with those in another.

## 6. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

In regard to the relationship between the ‘category’ of religious experience and the practice of interreligious dialogue, the preceding reflections would seem to justify at least four conclusions. The conclusions are admittedly modest in that they do not attempt to supply a full-proof, exhaustive answer to the question of how the notion of religious experience might function as a category for interreligious dialogue. However, they may well advance the discussion by raising some key points that must be further explored if a dialogue that takes religious experience as its basic category is to be seriously entertained and actually pursued.

The first conclusion is that both Lonergan and Newman regarded religious experience as a universal experience of conscious life that leads people beyond themselves towards authentic engagement in reality. In Lonerganian parlance, religious experience is an experience of self-transcendence that elicits creative understanding, rational evaluation, and responsible and loving actions. In addition, Lonergan and Newman seem to have agreed that the universal

character of religious experience does not imply that it will be expressed in strict, uniform fashion. Newman expressed this in drawing out the significance of individual religious temperament, as well as individual circumstances and environmental factors that inevitably influence a person's intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth.<sup>83</sup> Lonergan made the same point by often referring to the autonomous subject who must decide what she is to be: 'Autonomy decides what autonomy is to be.'<sup>84</sup> When this insight is applied to the notion of religious experience, we are led to believe that its expression will naturally admit a certain degree of difference. Moreover, in an era in which differences in historical and cultural contexts are coming to receive their due appreciation, it is now expected that human actions will reflect those differences. However, this is far from saying that expressions of religious experience in conscious living are entirely determined by external circumstances and entirely disparate. In Newman's view, conscience is the internal compass that guides persons towards right action. For his part, Lonergan emphasizes the related levels of conscious and intentional operations that emanate from the subject. The upshot of this is that both thinkers share the view that while external factors must be accounted for, they must not eclipse the internal factors operative within the realm of subjectivity (i.e., conscience and the transcendental precepts) that help to guide human living.

The second conclusion elaborates the first conclusion's claim that religious persons (i.e., the subjects of religious experience) are necessarily doers. The transcendent character of religious experience implies that religious people engage in and with the world as they encounter it, and the principal means by which they do so are devotional and ethical praxis. In this light, it would seem that any serious discussion of religious experience would eventually lead to other forms of dialogue.<sup>85</sup> If, for example, people of different traditions can speak meaningfully about an experience of conscience or self-transcendence, then they may very well be inspired to live out this experience in the context of a common religious community that transcends traditional religious boundaries without denying doctrinal differences. This is not to be confused with some type of syncretic, meta-religious community. Rather, what is at stake here are the types of communities that are (often spontaneously) formed when people of different religious traditions are united in common cause, such as when they collectively respond to the plight of human suffering in what the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue referred to as the dialogue of action.<sup>86</sup>

The third conclusion concerns the relevance of Lonergan and Newman in our contemporary, postmodern context. Both authors revealed their concern for the subject, a concern that is held in high regard in the current cultural scene and is evidenced, among other things, by the pervasiveness of social networking websites. While such sites, for example, *Facebook*, do not necessarily encourage the formation of authentic subjectivity, they have successfully drawn increased attention to the subject by encouraging people to speak (not to be confused with reflect) about themselves, including their wealth of experiences.<sup>87</sup> One of the results of this phenomenon is that the younger generations have developed a considerable level of comfort with subjective speech, i.e., speaking about what one experiences, thinks, and does. Given the global character of such networking sites, it would seem that this phenomenon is not confined to any particular religious or cultural group, but is universal and transcultural. Even if such talk is initially superficial – such as a status update – it does provide a point of entry into the discussion of who one is and/or desires to be. The somewhat daunting, yet very necessary task for pastors and educators is to critically ground these reflections on self in questions of truth – Is it true? – and value – Is it good? In an era when many people have no concrete connection to a particular religious community, but may nonetheless consider themselves to be religious, or at least spiritual, attending to the subject may very well prove to be an effective pedagogical

tool in introducing an anthropological vision that is open to humanity's basic capacity for religious experience. From this perspective, religious experience could well provide a way to broach questions dealing with religion in general as well as relations (including dialogue) among religiously diverse individuals and communities.

The fourth conclusion raises what is perhaps the most interesting and contentious question. The question concerns the necessity of grace and the mediatory role of the Catholic Church in regard to salvation. Recent Roman Catholic magisterial teaching has been unwilling to loosen the bond between grace and salvation on the one hand, and the Catholic Church's sacramental system on the other. The most prominent and clearest example of this teaching is found in the document *Dominus Iesus*. One of the statements that *Dominus Iesus* is best known and criticized for is the following, "Objectively speaking, they [followers of other religions] are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation."<sup>88</sup> While the question of how such an objective statement can actually be made is an important one, it must be taken up in the context of a subsequent essay.<sup>89</sup> Our immediate concern here is with the idea of 'grave deficiency.' Newman and Lonergan are united in their conviction that all human beings (i.e., subjects) are endowed with the capacity to know what is true and do what is good, regardless of religious creed or lack thereof. As we have seen, Newman makes this point with his thoughts on the experience of conscience and Lonergan supports these ideas through his appeal to the self-transcendent character of human beings. At the same time, neither Newman nor Lonergan were willing to ignore or negate the necessity of grace and the mediatory role of the Catholic Church and the sacraments in the cause of salvation. On this point we can refer to Newman's idea that natural religion serves as a preparation for and creates the anticipation of revelation and that 'there is only one Religion in the world [Christianity] which tends to fulfil the aspirations, needs, and foreshadowings of natural faith and devotion.'<sup>90</sup> In addition, he was forthright in arguing that the sacraments are 'pledges and means of grace' administered by Christian Ministers (i.e., priests) to men and women so as to sustain, perfect and fulfill them.<sup>91</sup> It would seem that Lonergan suggests a similar line of argumentation by equating the gift of God's love with sanctifying grace and affirming the Catholic Church as an 'out-going process' called to realize the kingdom of God, both within and beyond its organizational borders.<sup>92</sup> So, while neither Newman nor Lonergan propose a strict parity between Christianity, or more specifically, Roman Catholicism, and other religions, the question remains as to whether the difference properly constitutes a 'grave deficiency.' Again, this is a question that calls for further reflection so as to promote a greater degree of clarity in regard to Christian self-understanding as well as understanding of the religious other.

To conclude, Michael Barnes has vividly described his west London neighborhood as a 'chaos of human religiosity.'<sup>93</sup> While not every place is endowed with such a considerable degree of 'chaos', it is a fact that religious individuals and communities are increasingly challenged by the presence of the other, either virtually or really. Given this state of affairs, it seems to be imperative to further exploit the opportunities provided by sustained reflection on ourselves as persons who experience religion quite personally and intimately, yet at the same time publicly and in the presence of those whose traditions are different, though perhaps not necessarily entirely irreconcilable with our own.

## Notes

1 Bernard Lonergan was one such theologian. In his introduction to a recently published collection of essays by Frederick Crowe, Michael Vertin points out that in the original Preface of *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Bernard Lonergan 'approvingly cites the exhortation of the twentieth-century Spanish

philosopher José Ortega y Gasset that one “strive to mount to the level of one’s time”’. For Vertin, this means that ultimately, one should ‘try to address the needs of one’s own period, take on the problems of one’s own world, confront the challenges of one’s own age’. See Frederick E. Crowe, *Loneragan and the Level of our Time*, Michael Vertin (ed.) (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2010), pp. xi–xii. The original Preface is available in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 3 no.1 (1985): 3–7. Lonergan wrote two prefaces, one in 1953 and another, the one that was actually published, in 1957. For an explanation of the genesis of the two prefaces see F.E. Crowe, ‘A Note on the Prefaces of *Insight*’, *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 3 no.1 (1985), pp. 1–3.

2 In 1991, the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue highlighted this point: ‘In the world of today, characterized by rapid communication, mobility of persons, and interdependence, there is a new awareness of the fact of religious plurality . . . In the present context of religious plurality, the important role played by religious traditions cannot be overlooked’. See *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (§4), available at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_19051991\\_dialogue-and-proclamatio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html)). Hereafter referred to as *Dialogue and Proclamation*.

3 My understanding of ‘inter-religious dialogue’ is borrowed from Francis X. Clooney. Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 10.

4 This proposal is obviously contested by those thinkers, most notably George Lindbeck, who defend a cultural-linguistic model of religion that maintains that ‘there can be no experiential core because, so the argument goes, the experiences that religions evoke and mold are as varied as the interpretive schemes they embody.’ See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p. 26. For perceptive commentary on Lindbeck’s view, especially as it relates and inveighs against the one put forward by Newman and Lonergan (i.e., and the one presented in this essay) see Matthew Petillo, ‘The Universalist Philosophy of Religious Experience and the Challenges of Post-Modernism’, *Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010), pp. 948–9. Hereafter referred to as Petillo, ‘The Universalist Philosophy of Religious Experience’.

5 Miikka Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), p. 35. Hereafter referred to as Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine*. In his review of Jewish-Christian relations, Edward Kessler points out that the *Shoah* occasioned a variety of Christian responses that sought to move the relationship between the two religions in a positive direction. See Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), pp. 140–44. Michael Barnes emphasizes that while the *Shoah* made the Catholic Church’s pastoral concerns for the Jewish people an immediate need, such concerns have much deeper roots in an extensive history of Christian anti-Semitism. See Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), p.35. Hereafter referred to as Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*.

6 For an extensive overview of the history of anti-Semitism, especially its prevalence in Christian history, see Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

7 Gavin D’Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), p.101. *Nostra Aetate* was promulgated during the fourth and final session of the council, on October 28, 1965. For a brief historical overview of the document, including a clear explanation of how it was initially intended to deal exclusively with the relations between Christians and Jews, see, Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine*, pp. 35–44. For the full text of *Nostra Aetate* see, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, (ed.) Norman P. Tanner (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), pp. 968–71. Hereafter referred to as *Nostra Aetate*.

8 T. Merrigan, ‘For Us and for Our Salvation: The Notion of Salvation History in the Contemporary Theology of Religions’, *Irish Theological Quarterly* 64 (1999), p. 344.

9 *Nostra Aetate* §1.

10 *Nostra Aetate* explicitly mentions Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism as religions associated with the development of civilization. At the same time, it leaves room for other religions to fit into this category, specifically, those religions that ‘strive in various ways to relieve the anxiety of the human heart by suggesting “ways”, that is teaching and rules of life as well as sacred rites.’ *Ibid.*, §2. In his commentary on this point, Miikka Ruokanen remarks that the association of the religions with the ‘more advanced’ or ‘developed’ civilizations is dependent upon the extent to which they use ‘exact language’ and ‘well-defined concepts’ to ask and respond to some of life’s most profound questions. This leads Ruokanen to reason that ‘The Council values especially religions with a long literary tradition, i.e., religions which are similar to the Judeo-Christian tradition. [Thus] the council seems to rank the great world religions higher than it does any other religious phenomena of human life.’ See Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine*, 64. For further analysis on the question of ranking religions see pp. 71–83.

11 Ibid.

12 T. Merrigan, 'The Anthropology of Conversion: Newman and the Contemporary Theology of Religions', in *Newman and Conversion*, (ed.), Ian Ker (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1997), p. 117. Hereafter referred to as Merrigan, 'Anthropology'. As noted by Barnes, one of the features of modernity that has come under particularly stringent critique from so-called post-modern thinkers is the idea of the master narrative. See Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, pp. 14–15. For a critique of the master narrative as well as the proposal of a specifically postmodern alternative labeled as *open narratives* see L. Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context*, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 30 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 59–64. Hereafter referred to as Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*.

13 L. Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, p. 53.

14 Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, p. 54. See also Merrigan, 'Anthropology' p. 118.

15 Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, pp. 52, 54–5.

16 Fred Lawrence, 'The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Postmodern Concern for the Other', *Theological Studies* 54 (1993), p. 56. Hereafter referred to as Lawrence, 'Fragility'.

17 Lawrence interestingly notes that Kant differs from Hobbes, Locke, and Hume to the extent that he wishes to employ the perception model more strictly and consistently. In Lawrence's words, 'According to Kant, in order for anything to be an object of knowledge at all, it must first be an object of *sense* perception. Since there can be no sense perception of consciousness and its acts, they cannot be known in the strict sense of objective knowledge, but only deduced, or better, postulated as conditions of the possibility of cognitional activity.' See Lawrence, 'Fragility', 60.

18 Ibid., p. 59.

19 Ibid. This theme is dealt with in F. Crowe, 'The Puzzle of the Subject as Subject in Lonergan' in Michael Vertin (ed.), *Lonergan and the Level of Our Time* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), pp. 155–79. Crowe helpfully points out that an importance source for understanding Lonergan's thoughts on the matter is B. Lonergan, 'Horizon, History, Philosophy' in Philip J. McShane (ed.), *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 298–317 (especially pp. 315–16).

20 Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 1. Hereafter referred to as Tillich, *Dynamics*.

21 Tillich, *Dynamics*, pp. 2–3, 55.

22 The notion of sacrifice is crucial to both faith and religion. As Tillich explains, the ultimate concern of faith, manifest in the religions, 'demands the total surrender of him who accepts this claim [the claim to ultimacy], and it promises total fulfillment even if all other claims have to be subjected to it or rejected in its name.' See Tillich, *Dynamics*, p. 1.

23 Ibid., p. 2.

24 Ibid., p. 3.

25 Huston Smith, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), p. 286.

26 The influence of Saint Thomas Aquinas on Catholic theology and philosophy was solidified in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Aeternis Patris*, which singles out Thomas as an outstanding thinker in the Roman Catholic Church and makes his method normative. In this regard the encyclical states, 'Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others.' See *Aeternis Patris* § 31, available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_04081879\\_aeterni-patris\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris_en.html)

27 G. Daly, 'Newman, Divine Revelation, and the Catholic Modernists', T. Merrigan and I. Ker (eds.), *Newman and the Word* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), pp. 49–68 (here p. 53).

28 As pointed out by Nicholas Lash, this disclaimer appears repeatedly in Newman's correspondence, especially in the years leading up to the Vatican Council and, the publication of *A Grammar of Assent*. For example, he ended a letter written to Pusey in November 1867 saying, 'Mind, I do not write as a theologian, which I am not . . .' He repeated himself two years later, again writing to Pusey, with the words, 'I am not a theologian.' See N. Lash, 'Was Newman a Theologian?' *Heythrop Journal* XVII (1976), pp. 322–325 (here p. 322); C.S. Dessain (ed.) *Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* [hereafter *L&D*] XXIII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 369; *L&D* XXIV, p. 363.

29 G. Hughes, 'Conscience', Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009), pp. 189–220 (here p. 195).

30 J.M. Cameron, 'Newman and the Empiricist Tradition' John Coulson and A.M. Allchin (eds.), *The Rediscovery of Newman: An Oxford Symposium* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1967), pp. 76–99 (here p. 83).

The principal difficulty is an eventual skepticism concerning the object that results from a split between the outward/public object, and the private/inward impression by which it is apprehended in individual minds.

31 Ibid.

32 John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of His Religious Opinions*, Martin J. Svaglic (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 18.

33 Ibid., p. 180.

34 John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. IV (London: Rivingtons, 1873), p. 284.

35 '... by first principles I mean the propositions with which we start in reasoning on any given subject-matter.' John Henry Newman, *An Essay in aid of A Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), p. 60. Hereafter referred to as Newman, *Grammar*.

36 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 105.

37 It is not at all surprising that many of Newman's reflections on the nature and role of conscience are found in §1 of Chapter X of the *Grammar*, entitled *Natural Religion*. See Newman, *Grammar*, pp. 389–408.

38 Terrence Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts: The Religious and Theological Ideal of John Henry Newman*, Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs 7 (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), p. 38. Hereafter referred to as Merrigan, *Clear Heads*.

39 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 390; while in many instances Newman referred exclusively to men, in speaking of conscience it is noteworthy that he made explicit reference to women.

40 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 105; see also E. Sillem (ed.) *The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman*, vol. II (Louvain: Nauwelaerts Publishing House, 1970), p. 49. Hereafter referred to as Newman, *Philosophical Notebook*.

41 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 106; Newman, *Philosophical Notebook*, p. 49.

42 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 109.

43 T. Merrigan, 'Newman and Religious Experience', L. Boeve and L.P. Hemming (eds.) *Divinising Experience: Essays in the History of Religious Experience from Origen to Ricoeur* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), pp. 231–45 (here p. 136). Hereafter referred to as Merrigan, 'Newman and Religious Experience', and Merrigan, *Clear Heads*, 31. See also Newman, *Philosophical Notebook*, pp. 31–35, 71–75.

44 I do not use the word 'second' to denote priority, but rather to denote 'additional' or 'another'.

45 In addition to conscience, the other two natural 'channels' that furnish us with religious knowledge are, as Newman says, 'the voice of mankind, and the course of the world, that is, of human life and human affairs.' Nonetheless, it is clear that Newman endows conscience with a certain priority, for he refers to it as 'the most authoritative of these three means of knowledge' by which we test, interpret and correct what is presented to us for belief by the other two channels. See Newman, *Grammar*, p. 389.

46 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 109. The 'lively' character of God is crucial to Newman's argument in light of his claim that only persons are capable of stirring our affections. As he puts the point, 'Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion.' And again, 'we are not affectionate towards a stone, nor do we feel shame before a horse or a dog ...' See Newman, *Grammar*, pp. 93, 110.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid. He repeats this later in the *Grammar* saying, 'Our great internal teacher of religions is, as I have said in an earlier part of this Essay, our Conscience.' See *ibid.*, p. 389.

49 For further insight into the nature and role of the imagination in Newman's thought see Merrigan, *Clear Heads*, pp. 48–81. See also T. Merrigan, 'The "Theological Imaginary" in History John Henry Newman and the Catholic Theological Imagination', *Louvain Studies* 34 (2009–2010), pp. 185–208; T. Merrigan 'Imagination and Religious Commitment in the Pluralist Theology of Religions', *Louvain Studies* 27 (2002), pp. 197–217 (here pp. 208–213); T. Merrigan 'The Image of the Word: Faith and Imagination in John Henry Newman and John Hick', Terrence Merrigan & Ian T. Ker (eds.) *Newman and the Word*, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 27 (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), pp. 5–47.

50 T. Merrigan, 'Newman on Faith in the Trinity', Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (eds.) *Newman and Faith*, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 31 (Louvain: Peeters, 2004), pp. 93–116 (here p. 96).

51 Jan Walgrave, *Newman the Theologian: The Nature of Belief and Doctrine as Exemplified in His Life and Works* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960), p. 110.

52 Merrigan, 'Newman and Religious Experience', p. 136. See also Newman, *Philosophical Notebook*, p. 59.

53 Newman, *Grammar*, pp. 389, 391.

54 John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), p. 80.

55 'This sensation of conscience is the recognition of our obligation involving the notion of an external being obliging . . . The notion of a future judgment is thus involved in the feeling of conscience.' Newman, *Philosophical Notebook*, p. 59. Jan Walgrave reflected on the moral dimensions of conscience in Newman's thought in 'Conscience de Soi et Conscience de Dieu: Notes sur le «Cahier Philosophique» de Newman', *Revue Thomiste* 71 (1971), pp. 367–80 (here at 377). Here, Walgrave remarks that the particular 'object' of conscience (i.e., that which we intentionally choose) is either that which is good or that which is bad.

56 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 107.

57 Ibid.

58 B. Lonergan, 'Existenz and Aggiornamento', Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (eds.), *Collection*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988), pp. 222–31 (here at p. 229). Hereafter referred to as Lonergan, 'Existenz'.

59 B. Lonergan, 'Cognitional Structure', Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (eds.), *Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988), pp. 205–22 (here p. 210).

60 M. Petillo, 'The Universalist Philosophy of Religious Experience and the Challenges of Post-Modernism', p. 953.

61 'We do not know ourselves very well; we cannot chart the future; we cannot control our environment completely or the influences that work on us; we cannot explore our unconscious and preconscious mechanisms. Our course is in the night; our control is only rough and approximate; we have to believe and trust, to risk and dare.' Lonergan, 'Existenz', p. 224.

62 'The immanent source of transcendence in man is his detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know.' Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3, Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (eds.), (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1992), p. 659. Hereafter referred to as Lonergan, *Insight*.

63 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, I, 980a. On this point Lonergan said, 'Deep within us all, emergent when the noise of other appetites is stilled, there is a drive to know, to understand, to see why, to discover the reason, to find the cause, to explain.' Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 28.

64 B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), p. 11. Hereafter referred to as Lonergan, *Method*.

65 Lonergan, 'Existenz', p. 223.

66 Lonergan, *Method*, p. 238.

67 See Lonergan, *Method*, pp. 25, 83, 261, 297, 316; B. Lonergan, 'Theories of Inquiry: Responses to a Symposium', William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (eds.) *A Second Collection*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996), pp. 33–42 (here p. 37); B. Lonergan, 'The Subject', *A Second Collection*, pp. 69–86 (here p. 86). I am indebted to Vertin for providing the references to Lonergan's texts. See M. Vertin, 'Lonergan's "Three Basic Questions and A Philosophy of Philosophies"', *Lonergan Workshop*, v. 8 (1990), pp. 213–248 (here p. 216). Hereafter referred to as Vertin 'Three Basic Questions'.

68 Lonergan, *Method*, p. 17; see also B. Lonergan, 'Insight Revisited' William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (eds.), *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996), pp. 263–78 (here p. 273).

69 Vertin, 'Three Basic Questions', p. 219.

70 This point is taken up in detail in Chapter 11 of *Insight*, entitled *Self-affirmation of the knower*. See Lonergan, *Insight*, 343–71.

71 Lonergan, *Method*, p. 105.

72 Ibid; see also B. Lonergan, 'First Lecture: Religious Experience', Frederick E. Crowe (ed.), *A Third Collection: Papers By Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 115–28 (here p. 123). Hereafter referred to as Lonergan, 'Religious Experience'.

73 Lonergan, *Method*, p. 105; Lonergan, 'Religious Experience', pp. 123–24.

74 Lonergan, *Method*, p. 106.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., pp. 106, 111. The same point is made by Lonergan when he says that being in love with God is the fulfillment of our conscious intentionality, see Lonergan, *Method*, p. 105.

77 For recent treatments of Lonergan's theology of grace, especially in relation to religious experience, see C. Jacobs-Vandegeer 'Sanctifying Grace in a "Methodical Theology"', *Theological Studies* 68 (2007), pp. 52–76. Hereafter referred to as Jacobs-Vandegeer, 'Sanctifying Grace'. See also L.M. Petillo, 'The Theological Problem of Grace and Experience: A Lonerganian Perspective', *Theological Studies* 71 (2010), pp. 586–608. Two less recent, but equally valuable and relevant studies of Lonergan's theology of grace are available in R.

Doran, 'Consciousness and Grace', *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11 (1993), pp. 51–75, and R. Doran, 'Revisiting "Consciousness and Grace"', *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995), pp. 151–59.

78 Lonergan, *Method*, p. 106.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

80 Jacobs-Vandegeer, 'Sanctifying Grace', p. 53.

81 For Hick's explanation of religious experience see, for example, John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 153–58. Hereafter referred to as Hick, *An Interpretation*. For a fine summary of Hick's position see Paul Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions* (London: SCM, 2010), pp.113–14.

82 S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), pp. 39–42.

83 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 116.

84 Lonergan, 'Existenz', p. 224.

85 See, for example, the discussion concerning the dialogue of life and the dialogue of action as articulated by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in *Dialogue and Proclamation* (§42).

86 *Ibid.*

87 I am grateful to Alison Benders for helping me to reflect on the nature and importance of authentic identity formation in postmodern culture and the influence of social networking sites in this regard. See A. Benders, 'Beyond *Myspace*: Grounding Postmodern Identity in Lonergan's Interiority Analysis', *Lonergan Workshop*, v. 21 (2009), pp. 1–16.

88 'Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church' (§22), available at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000806\\_dominus-iesus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html).

89 On this point it would be worthwhile to examine the recurrent theme in Lonergan's work that genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity. See, for example, Lonergan, *Method*, pp. 265, 292. Margaret O'Gara and Michael Vertin have provided some illuminating reflection on this in their article, 'The Holy Spirit's Assistance to the Magisterium in Teaching: Theological and Philosophical Issues', *Proceedings: Catholic Theological Society of America* (1996): pp. 125–42 (here p. 132–33).

90 Newman, *Grammar*, pp. 422–23, 430.

91 John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. II (London: Rivingtons, 1873), pp. 300–19, see especially p. 309.

92 Lonergan, *Method*, pp. 107, 363–64.

93 Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, p. 4.