Some Clarifications of the Nature of Religious Experience in Light of Bernard Lonergan’s Hermeneutics of Interiority

by

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Abstract

This work examines the nature of religious experience, informed by Bernard Lonergan’s hermeneutics of interiority. Specifically, the author argues that instances of “human” love can already implicitly contain “divine” love, and therefore be instances of religious experience. Robert Doran and Jeremy Blackwood’s recent suggestions regarding a fifth level of consciousness (the “level of love”) are examined. This author shares their view that there is complete self-transcendence in both human and divine love, but suggests an alternative to Doran and Blackwood’s ideas on several points. This study distinguishes between phenomenological, psychological, and theological methodological approaches and their corresponding characterizations of religious experience. Confusion on this point might be an important factor behind the extensive debate that this topic has generated in Lonergan studies. Implications of the argument for the debate on a possible fifth level of consciousness as well as for integration of Lonergan’s thought with liberation theology are briefly considered.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1. Purpose, Question, and Thesis Statement

The purpose of this work is to clarify the nature of religious experience in light of Bernard Lonergan’s hermeneutics of interiority. In doing so, I hope to contribute to an ongoing conversation among some students of Lonergan’s thought concerning the nature of religious experience and its relationship to human love. The central research question guiding this work, then, is what the nature of religious experience is. More specifically, since in the Christian tradition religious experience is generally understood as the experience of divine love, I will examine the relationship between “human” and “divine” love, which are often contrasted with each other. I will explore the type of self-transcendence involved in each, as well as clarifying some of the different methodologies – phenomenological, psychological and theological – that are used to study these issues. Inspired by Lonergan’s hermeneutics of interiority, I will argue that an examination of a type of experience that one might have in relation to another person (an experience that we tend to give the label “love”) can reveal that “divine” love, or religious experience, can already be implicitly present in instances of human love. This, then, has important implications for our understanding of religious experience and its relation to human nature.

1.2. Some Background

In what way religious experience sublates operations of deliberation and action is a contested topic among some students of Lonergan’s thought. They disagree, for example, on whether or not the schematization of that type of sublation would require the extension of the spatial metaphor of levels of consciousness to include a fifth level. Briefly, and speaking in general
terms, Lonergan’s hermeneutics of interiority brings into focus (at least) four interrelated sets of conscious-intentional operations, which characterize the performance of human beings as knowers and choosers. Thus, Lonergan and his students often speak of four “levels” — in a metaphorical sense — of human consciousness.

First, then, there is a level of experience, which includes the performance of what we can call “operations of experience,” such as seeing, tasting, and smelling, as well as experiencing feelings, moods, and other data of awareness, and their normative orientation towards attention, which leads one to experience sensorial data and data of awareness in a whole way. Second, there is a level of understanding that includes the performance of what we can call “operations of understanding,” such as inquiring and conceiving, and their normative orientation towards intelligence, which leads one towards a grasp of coherence and intelligibility. Third, there is a level of reflection that includes the performance of what we can call “operations of reflection” such as weighting evidence and making judgments of fact based on the evidence, and their normative orientation towards reasonableness, which leads one towards knowing what is true, factual, or real. And fourth, there is a level of deliberation and action, which includes the performance of what we can call “operations of deliberation and action” such as making value judgments, choosing, and acting based on one’s choices, and their normative orientation towards responsibility, which leads one towards knowing and choosing what is truly worthwhile, valuable, and good.

Those are some of the main components of what we can call a Lonerganian philosophical anthropology, which becomes theological upon the addition of some other foundational views, regarding, for example, religious experience, religious conversion, and the character of human and divine love. Whether these foundational, theological views entail the existence of a fifth
level of human consciousness has produced an important and long disagreement, for more than 20 years now, among some students of Lonergan’s thought.

1.3. Why This Work Is Important

The topic of the fifth level of consciousness has emerged again in Lonergan scholarship with some recent suggestions made by Jeremy Blackwood and Robert Doran, where they conceive this fifth level as the “level of love,” which includes both human love and divine love (i.e. religious experience). The present work examines their contributions on this point, and agrees with the idea that both human and divine love involve complete self-transcendence; however, I propose a different conceptualization of the relationship between human and divine love. In addition, distinguishing amongst phenomenological, psychological, and theological methodologies or frameworks when discussing this issue helps to illuminate the different layers of meaning in the experience that we label “religious experience.” Based on this, I argue that in fact, the concept of “love” may not be the most inclusive or helpful vehicle for understanding religious experience. Thus this study presents a potentially significant new perspective on an issue that is both important in itself and current in Lonergan studies. More broadly, this work presents implications for the current debate in Lonergan studies regarding the correct interpretation of the phenomenological features of religious experience and its metaphysical implications by supporting Michael Vertin’s position on this issue, as well as by endorsing the proposed integration of liberation theology with Lonergan’s theology, suggested by Robert Doran. In a still broader sense, this study raises important questions that are relevant to the continued reconceptualization of the relationship between nature and grace in Christian theology.
1.4. Sources and Methodology

The primary literature for this study includes the major works of Bernard Lonergan, as well as lesser works including unpublished material found in the Lonergan Archives. Specifically, since Lonergan writes very little explicitly on the particular question of the relation between human and divine love, this work focuses on Lonergan’s writings on religious experience, and more generally on the relation between nature and grace. In addition, I will use some secondary literature that treats the topic of religious experience in Lonergan’s thought. Recent works by Jeremy Blackwood and Robert Doran, mentioned above, will be especially important in Chapter 2. On the other hand, the methodology of this work is primarily phenomenological, in the style of a Lonerganian phenomenology, and is also exegetical, or more precisely interpretative, in relation to some of Bernard Lonergan’s ideas. Lonergan’s phenomenology is based on describing the conscious-intentional operations that we inevitably perform whenever we come to know and choose something objectively. Lonergan conceives objectivity as authentic subjectivity, and thus engaging in not only exegesis and interpretation but also in phenomenology along the lines he describes is a reasonable approach to elucidating his ideas – particularly when these ideas are not spelled out fully in his own work. By saying this I do not mean that I will try to explain and argue for what I think Lonergan himself thought on the particular issues that I will treat here. Rather, my focus will be on religious experience itself, and I will be arguing for a view of my own, inspired by, and using as an investigative tool, Lonergan’s hermeneutics of interiority.

1.5. The Structure of This Work

This study is divided into four chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Human and Divine Love in Jeremy Blackwood and Robert Doran’s Account of the Fifth Level of Human Consciousness, (3) Some Proposed Clarifications, and (4) Conclusions and Implications. Chapter 2 consists primarily of a
presentation of Doran and Blackwood’s explorations regarding a potential fifth level of consciousness (the “level of love”) and their suggestion that although humans undergo complete self-transcendence in both human and divine love, there is a religious component in the complete self-transcendence of divine love that is not present in the complete self-transcendence of human love. Key features of the level of love will be analyzed, and an alternative to Doran and Blackwood’s approach will be suggested. Chapter 3 will argue that examining an example of an experience of love for another person will reveal that there can already be religious experience or “divine” love, in an implicit way, in the concrete experience of supposedly merely “human” love. In turn, the suggestion will be made that Lonergan’s contrast between human and divine love does not primarily refer to two different experiences that occur in concrete, historical human living (one human and in addition one divine). Rather, this is primarily a theoretical distinction regarding two different ways of understanding the dynamism of human affectivity, on the one hand, in proportion to our human nature (i.e. in human love), and, on the other hand, wholly disproportionate to it (i.e. in religious experience/divine love). Based on that clarification we can recognize some different methodological approaches in Lonergan’s account of religious experience and in the work of some of his interpreters, which often are only implicitly present in those accounts, and, in addition, are often intertwined with one another, adding difficulties to the analysis of religious experience.

Moreover, these clarifications will have some important implications for future work on the topic of religious experience. For example, as noted above, they will support Michael Vertin’s views on the phenomenological features of religious experience and its metaphysical implications. In addition, they will support Robert Doran’s suggestion regarding the need to further integrate Lonergan’s theology with the key insights of liberation theology, particularly
with regards to the thought of Gustavo Gutiérrez. These matters will be treated briefly in Chapter 4, after general conclusions are drawn based on the ideas presented in Chapters 2 and 3.
Chapter 2
Human and Divine Love in Jeremy Blackwood and Robert Doran’s Account of the Fifth Level of Human Consciousness

2.1. The Level of Love: An Introduction

Jeremy Blackwood and Robert Doran have recently treated the topic of human and divine love in the context of their explorations regarding a potential fifth level of consciousness: the “level of love.”¹ In his book *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions* (2012), Doran explains how their views on this issue came to be. He says that the “history of the responses to the suggestion of a fifth level of consciousness that [he] took from Lonergan and tried to develop has been very accurately summarized” in Jeremy Blackwood’s paper “Sanctifying Grace, Elevation, and the Fifth Level of Consciousness: Further Development within Lonergan Scholarship.” Doran calls this paper “a major contribution to an ongoing conversation among some of Lonergan’s students.”² In this section of *The Trinity in History*, Doran in turn summarizes Blackwood’s paper, which he calls “the most complete treatment to date of this

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¹ These ideas are found in Jeremy Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace, Elevation, and the Fifth Level of Consciousness,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies N.S.* 2.2 (2011): 143-61; in Robert Doran, “Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling: A Key to the Nexus Mysterium Fidei,” *Lonergan Workshop* 23 (2009): 165-94 (see especially 188-94); and throughout Doran’s book *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). My presentation of their views is based primarily on these published sources; however, I have also complemented this presentation by examining Blackwood’s dissertation “Love and Lonergan’s Cognitional-Intentional Anthropology: An Inquiry on the Question of a ‘Fifth Level of Consciousness,’” defended in 2012 at Marquette University, since it contains relevant material directly related to these ideas. However, since the dissertation itself is as yet unpublished, I make sensitive and limited use of it.

² Doran, *Trinity*, 127-28. Blackwood’s views, summarized there concisely by Doran, of course appear more fully in Blackwood’s article itself. Thus Blackwood’s article seems to be the most complete published source for the views summarized by Doran in his book. Hence, in this presentation, I will highlight and examine Blackwood’s ideas as they are found in this article, mentioning as well the passages from Doran’s book where he endorses and develops them.
issue”; he also suggests “several other possible connections” and theological implications of these views.  

In this section of the current study, my main purpose is to report and analyze key features of Blackwood and Doran’s ideas in a clear and accurate way; I will be focusing primarily on Blackwood’s article, “Sanctifying Grace,” because as we have just seen, Doran explicitly refers to it as the most fully elaborated account of the views that he and Blackwood largely share, but I will supplement this with material from Doran where appropriate. However, my purpose here is to properly contextualize the presentation of my own suggestions in relation to religious experience, which is my main goal in this work. Thus, given the limitations of space and the key aims of this project, I do not attempt here to exhaustively explain Blackwood and Doran’s views. In addition, it will be clear in what follows that I am proposing an alternative to Doran and Blackwood’s approach. Nonetheless, I wish to stress that I do not see all of my ideas as standing in opposition to theirs; rather, I aim to establish a better framework in which to contextualize their many insightful suggestions. Having stated this clearly, let us now move to survey some important features that characterize the fifth level of consciousness in Blackwood and Doran’s account.

Blackwood’s paper, which is now a published article, briefly summarizes some of the contributions of various Lonergan scholars to the conversation about a potential fifth level of consciousness in Lonergan’s approach. Blackwood notes that “clearly there is a significant lack of agreement” on this topic. Nevertheless, he affirms, “the recent discovery in the Lonergan Archives of two more records of the question-and-answer sessions, from the Lonergan Workshops of 1977 and 1980, has offered up further data on the fifth-level question that may

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3 Doran, *Trinity*, 128.
help to clarify the answer.”⁴ Doran appears to agree about the importance of these newly discovered sources, since he suggests that Blackwood’s use of this material from the Lonergan Archives effectively supports Blackwood’s ideas (as well as his own) on the existence of a fifth level of consciousness, and also on the main features of this level. Doran calls Blackwood’s article “an important piece of research,” and affirms that these records, which “had not been appealed to in previous discussions of [Doran’s] suggestion regarding a fifth level, confirm that Lonergan did maintain a fifth level, but that it is not exclusively connected with the supernatural.”⁵ Doran continues:

I believe these sessions make that affirmation unassailable. There is a level of love in its various forms, including the unrestricted being-in-love that [Blackwood] identifies with sanctifying grace. It cannot be reduced to the four levels of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision. The distinguishing characteristic of the fifth level is not the supernatural as opposed to the natural but the interpersonal character of so-called fifth level experience, the concern with the “other” and especially with the beloved whose presence in the lover is constituted precisely by love itself. Fifth-level experience is the conscious relation between the conscious subject in love and the other with whom the subject is in love. One thinks readily of Lonergan’s discussion in The Triune God: Systematics of the presence of the beloved in the lover, a presence that is constituted by love.⁶

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⁴ Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 151. I include these sources in an appendix at the end of this work. According to Blackwood, these two sources were first noticed by Doran, who promptly gave him the opportunity to make use of them. See Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 151, n. 33.

⁵ Doran, Trinity, 129.

⁶ Doran, Trinity, 129-30. Emphasis in the original.
In this way, Doran affirms his positive assessment of Blackwood’s research and states that in light of that newly discovered archival material, the main distinctive feature of the fifth level of consciousness – the “level of ‘love’” – is not its supernatural aspect, since that applies only to divine love, but rather its interpersonal character, since this is a defining feature of both divine and human love.⁷

Blackwood readily reports his reliance on those two sources from the 1977 and 1980 Lonergan Workshops and states what he thinks is the key conclusion to be taken from these data, which concurs with Doran’s evaluation. Blackwood affirms:

Given these data … [Lonergan’s] primary affirmation in relation to the fifth level is that it is a fifth level of love, not (proximately, at least) a fifth level of religious experience. That is, Lonergan seems to be indicating that this level is constituted by love and that the level constituted by love is the level of consciousness at which religious experience is had, not that the fifth level is constituted by religious experience. Moreover, given that his primary examples of love are the love of community, of spouse, and of God, only one of which is intrinsically supernatural or disproportionate love, a fifth level of love need not be posited as the level, or even the proper effect, of sanctifying grace in consciousness. In other words, one can discuss the fifth level without the proximate intention of dealing with the issue of sanctifying grace.⁸

Thus, for Blackwood and Doran this archival material shows that the fifth level of human consciousness, which is fundamentally different from the other four, is defined by its interpersonal nature, expressed through love in all of its forms. Thus both authors emphasize the

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⁷ Also, Doran mentions that he has found additional support in another question-and-answer session, this time from the 1975 Lonergan Workshop. See Trinity, 368, n. 29. This is also presented in the Appendix.

fact that the fifth level is not limited to religious experience, or what they call the “supernatural” form of love (divine love), which is “disproportionate” to the lover. Rather, the main feature of the fifth level refers to what is most characteristic of both types of love – “natural” and “supernatural,” “proportionate” and “disproportionate,” “human” and “divine” – which, as just noted, is its interpersonal character. In addition, as we will see, Blackwood and Doran hold that the archival materials show that the interpersonal nature that characterizes both types of love entails complete self-transcendence. We will examine these two features later; however, before doing that, I will comment on the large degree of agreement that exists in Blackwood and Doran’s views.

Doran concludes his summary of Blackwood’s views by mentioning some of the key features of Blackwood’s suggestions and giving his clear agreement on them. Blackwood, Doran notes,

characterizes fifth-level operation as constituted by the self-forgetting of love, “the self-possessed handing over of one’s central form to the determination of another” in love. He speaks of a fifth-level question in terms of “What would you have me do?” And the fifth level object is persons as persons, as subjects. As elevated, the fifth level gains the absolutely supernatural personal object of the three divine persons of the Trinity. The advance made by Jacobs-Vandegeer is not negated by this return to fifth level talk, since the fifth level is the elevation of central form itself in complete transcendence in the triune God … I find Blackwood’s discussion convincing.10

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9 These various pairings are used interchangeably by both Blackwood and Doran.
10 Doran, *Trinity*, 130.
For his part, Blackwood has also acknowledged Doran’s agreement with his views. Blackwood says that Doran “has been supportive of both Jacobs-Vandegeer in his hypothesis on the elevation of central form and my [i.e. Blackwood’s] suggestions on the explanatory specification of elevation and the clarification of the fifth level.”\(^{11}\) For these reasons, then, I would argue that it is possible and appropriate to treat their views as being largely in agreement with each other without thereby running the risk of misrepresenting them, at least in relation to their main views on the fifth level and on human and divine love, and in relation to the specific purposes of this work.

Doran emphasizes the importance of his and Blackwood’s recent ideas on the fifth level for correctly developing an anthropology along the lines opened up by Lonergan, as well as the significance of this new archival material to support these ideas. He also alludes to the large debate that this topic has produced in the field of Lonergan scholarship, extending Blackwood’s comments above. Doran agrees with Blackwood’s claim that “further development … is required on two points: the precise meaning of ‘elevation’ needs clarification, and recently-noticed materials in the Lonergan archives suggest that the notion of a fifth level needs re-evaluation.”\(^{12}\) He develops Blackwood’s suggestion by offering a preliminary reflection on these two points:

\(\text{[If you don’t want to talk about levels and numbers of levels, then we might say that a fuller grasp of the full range of sublating and sublated operations and states is required. In my view, restriction of self-appropriation to four levels of intentional consciousness will result in the appropriation of a severely truncated self, a self where openness as fact, openness as achievement, and openness as gift are all neglected. Moreover, whether} \)
“level” language is kept or not, an indication must be provided of what elevation would mean for what we have up to now referred to as the levels of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision, for the feelings that accompany these levels, and for the vital, social, cultural, and personal levels of value that are respectively isomorphic with these levels of consciousness. In any event, the basic four levels of intentional consciousness are not enough, and to say that they are is to place on our consciousness a … kind of straightjacket.\(^\text{13}\)

As a result, Doran calls for an account of “elements of consciousness that lie beyond the levels of intentional consciousness, on either end”\(^\text{14}\) – that is, an account of, on the one hand, what Doran sees as the level prior to and implicit in all other levels, and characterized by psychic and somatic energies, and on the other, of the level following decision that is characterized by loving interpersonal relations.

### 2.2. Blackwood’s Transposition of Sanctifying Grace into a Methodical Theology

Doran begins his summary of Blackwood’s ideas by presenting Blackwood’s review of Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer’s views on the transposition of sanctifying grace into a methodical

\(^{13}\) Doran, \textit{Trinity} 128-29.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 129. These are labelled the “zeroth” level and the “fifth” level, respectively (See Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 160). Only the fifth level will be treated in the current study; however, it is worth noting that Doran suggests a connection between the concept of psychic conversion and the fifth level of consciousness, and he implies that rejection of the idea of psychic conversion could be a reason behind the high degree of debate that some of his views have generated among some students of Loneran’s thought. Doran asks: “Is it the case that the rejection of the notion of psychic conversion is linked with the rejection of such further notions as the fifth level of consciousness, the affirmation of beauty as a transcendent, the fourth stage of meaning, and the role of aesthetic-dramatic operators in the promotion of authenticity in oneself, one’s culture, and one’s social milieu? The answer, I think, is clear” (\textit{Trinity}, 131). For more on psychic conversion, see Part One, Chapter 2 of Doran’s \textit{Theology and the Dialectics of History} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), entitled “The Notion of Psychic Conversion.”
theology as well as Blackwood’s efforts to develop them further.\textsuperscript{15} To Jacobs-Vandegeer’s suggestion that (in Doran’s words) “sanctifying grace should be understood in a methodical theology as an intrinsic qualification of the unity of consciousness,” Doran responds, “The moment I saw Jacobs-Vandegeer’s statement to this effect, I knew it was correct.”\textsuperscript{16} However, as noted above, he then also endorses Blackwood’s call for further development on what “elevation” means and on the re-evaluation of the idea of a fifth level of consciousness, based on the new materials unearthed in the Lonergan Archives. Thus, we will first examine Blackwood’s views on Jacobs-Vandegeer’s suggestions. This seems to be a good starting point since in his article, Blackwood affirms that Jacobs-Vandegeer’s ideas constituted “a significant development in the transposition of sanctifying grace into the terms of a theology based on the categories of interiority,” and that the purpose of Jacobs-Vandegeer’s article was to “specify the element in intentional consciousness corresponding to the metaphysical concept, sanctifying grace.”\textsuperscript{17}

2.2.1. Blackwood’s Explanatory Account of Elevation of Central Form

Blackwood explains that for Lonergan the experience of being unrestrictedly in love is only notionally different from sanctifying grace, which he explains is problematic when it comes to “transposition” from one to the other, because in metaphysical theology sanctifying grace is an “entititative habit, residing in the essence of the soul,” while the experience of being unrestrictedly

\textsuperscript{15} These views refer to the transposition of what a metaphysical theology (i.e. Thomist theology) calls “sanctifying grace” into terms derived from the study of human consciousness, which would characterize a methodical theology (i.e. theology as envisioned by Lonergan).

\textsuperscript{16} Doran, \textit{Trinity}, 128. Emphasis in the original.

\textsuperscript{17} Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 144.
in love “seems in fact not entitative but accidental.”\textsuperscript{18} Blackwood describes Jacobs-Vandegeer’s proposed solution to this difficulty in the following way:

Jacobs-Vandegeer identified the entitative element of human being as central form, and turning to consciousness itself, he suggested that the unity of central form is manifested by the unity of consciousness (“the unity of consciousness reveals the concrete, intelligible form of the whole person”). Thus, the enlargement of the unified whole, consciousness, that is the dynamic state of being in love with God is the conscious manifestation of the entitative change that is understood in a metaphysical theology as sanctifying grace.\textsuperscript{19}

Blackwood mentions that he will refer to Jacobs-Vandegeer’s position simply as “elevation of central form.”\textsuperscript{20} He proposes to give “a fuller articulation of the meaning of ‘elevation’ or ‘enlargement,’” which will serve as an explanatory account of elevation in terms of consciousness using as a base some ideas found in some of the early works of Lonergan, specifically “The Natural Desire to See God” (1949), “Analysis of Faith” (1952), and “Openness and Religious Experience” (1960).\textsuperscript{21}

In addition to those works, Blackwood draws his explanatory account of elevation from Doran’s work on the scale of values. According to Blackwood, Doran proposes (drawing in turn on a suggestion by Daniel Monsour) that “we understand the relation of the first through fourth levels of the scale of values to the fifth level of the scale of values as one of obediential potency”; Blackwood says that “such a notion should obtain in the levels of consciousness other

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 144, n. 6.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 144-45.
than the fourth, as well, such that the relation between the natural and the supernatural objects of any level of consciousness is one of obediential potency.”\textsuperscript{22} Blackwood suggests that the conscious experience of elevation should be identified “as an act, the content of which is not fully accounted for by the act itself.”\textsuperscript{23} Thus, he explains,

“a supernatural object of human knowing” is whatever is intended by an act of knowing that does not itself account for the knowledge it attains – the knowledge is received at least partially as gift. Likewise … “a supernatural object of human deliberation” is whatever is intended by an act of deliberation that does not itself account for the value it grasps – again, the value is received at least partially as gift.\textsuperscript{24}

Blackwood notes that in “The Natural Desire to See God,” Lonergan highlights philosophy, theology, and the beatific vision as the paths to knowledge, ordered from least satisfactory to most perfect; Blackwood then connects these to the three hierarchically related realms of knowledge identified by scholastic epistemology: the light of intellect, the light of faith, and the light of glory, respectively.\textsuperscript{25} In the movement from one of these successive levels to the next, there is “an elevation … of knowing,” and so, Blackwood contends, “it is to knowing, and specifically to the horizons of knowing constituted by the light of intellect, the light of faith, and the light of glory, that we ought to attend in order to begin to grasp Lonergan’s

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 149. Doran identifies the “obediential potency of nature” in intentional consciousness as “a principle of movement and rest in quest of true meanings and a normative and nuanced scale of values” (Doran, \textit{Trinity}, 123). Doran also explains that obediential potency entails the transcendental notions (the natural human desire for total intelligibility, truth, and value), which ultimately are a natural desire for the vision of God, whose satisfaction occurs as “a supernatural participation in the divine life itself” (Doran, \textit{Trinity}, 215). This completion usually refers to the beatific vision, but also refers to the experience of God’s love (Doran, \textit{Trinity}, 157).

\textsuperscript{23} Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 149.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 145.
notion of elevation in consciousness.”26 It is from this starting point that he is then moved to claim that “[w]hether or not a given object is supernatural to a particular knower is not determined by the object itself, but by the light by which that object is attained.”27 In other words, a “supernatural object” is not proportionate to the light of the individual human intellect doing the knowing. As noted above, Blackwood looks to knowing as the model, in Lonergan’s thought, of elevation in consciousness; however, he argues that it can be extended beyond this realm, “to other levels of consciousness, such that at each of the levels of intentional consciousness, an elevated subject has two formal objects – the natural/proportionate and the supernatural/disproportionate.”28 One key goal of Blackwood’s paper is to explore the extension of elevation to the fifth level, the level of love; this will be treated later in this section of the current work.

Doran’s agreement with Blackwood’s analysis is evident in his approbation of it in The Trinity in History. He adds there that the details of this elevation remain to be worked out for the levels of experience and understanding.29 The relation of the natural and supernatural objects of any level is one of obediential potency. And the conscious experience of elevation at each level is related to “an act, the content of which is not fully accounted for by the act itself.”30

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 147.
28 Ibid., 148.
29 Doran mentions these two levels specifically because Blackwood already examines the levels of decision and love (the fourth and fifth levels) in his article. See Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 148-49.
In another work, “Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling,” Doran elaborates more fully on what he has in mind here. He suggests, for example, that on the level of decision, elevation allows one “to evaluate with God’s own values,” which, he suggests, “are quintessentially expressed in the Sermon on the Mount,” while on the level of understanding, elevation might be “most dramatically expressed in mystical insight, at times ineffable, into the meaning of the divine mysteries,” though it can also have “more pedestrian” manifestations in the form of “genuine theological understanding.” Elevation of the level of experience can manifest in “intense physiological participation in divine love, but also … in less intense fashion in what some theologies have called the spiritual senses.”

Doran states that, at any level, this elevation in consciousness is an elevation “to participation in Trinitarian life.” He agrees with Jacobs-Vandegeer’s suggestion that “sanctifying grace should be understood as an intrinsic qualification of the unity of consciousness” – in other words, sanctifying grace is identified with the elevation that has just been discussed. Moreover, as noted at the beginning of this section, for Lonergan sanctifying grace (or, now, elevation) is unrestricted being in love. Doran states:

As sanctifying grace is for Thomas Aquinas’s metaphysical or theoretical theology an entititative habit rooted in the essence of the soul, so for Lonergan the dynamic state of being in love without qualifications or reservations or conditions is an elevation of “central form,” that is, an elevation of that by which a human being is constituted as

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32 Ibid.
33 Doran, Trinity, 152.
34 Ibid., 128.
intelligibly one unity-identity-whole, and so in effect an elevation of the person in his or her conscious and unconscious totality.\textsuperscript{35}

2.2.2. \textbf{Blackwood’s Re-Examination of the Question of the Fifth Level}

Blackwood proceeds to examine the question of the fifth level of consciousness, first reviewing what he sees as the key ideas among some Lonergan scholars who have engaged in conversations on a fifth level of consciousness, such as Robert Doran, Michel Vertin, Patrick Byrne, and Tad Dunne, in the mid nineties, and then later, in 2007, Jacobs-Vandegeer. Then he examines the newly discovered archival records, and proceeds to give “a fuller account of the structure of the fifth level” including “the identification of a fifth-level operation, a fifth-level question, and fifth-level object, so that the structure of the entire elevated subject might be acknowledged.”\textsuperscript{36}

2.2.2.1. \textbf{Various Lonergan Scholars on the Fifth Level: Blackwood’s Account}

Blackwood reports, for example, that in 1993, “Doran took the position that the fifth level was the key to the transposition of sanctifying grace into a methodical theology.”\textsuperscript{37} Michael Vertin, in contrast, recognized (and continues to recognize) only four levels of consciousness, on the “strict” sense of the term. Vertin “offered a fundamental distinction between two meanings of the term ‘level’ in Lonergan”; in the strict sense, “level” derives its meaning from “the combination of … data of consciousness and sense, together with the three transcendental notions of the

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{36} Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 158.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 150.
intelligible, the true, and the good.” In the “wide” sense of the term, Vertin suggests that “level” means a “place occupied by some element in an intelligible pattern whose basic elements are (a) ordinary data, (b) the transcendental notions, and c) … religious experience, the feeling of unrestricted being in love, the fundamental datum of religious consciousness.” If the term “level” is taken in this wider sense, Blackwood explains, “Vertin held that it was possible to affirm five levels,” with the “fifth” including religious experience.

Tad Dunne, Blackwood notes, “essentially agreed with Vertin that Lonergan did not intend to affirm a distinct fifth level of consciousness” but still, like Vertin, allows for “a sense in which one could speak of a fifth level.” Specifically, Dunne recognized “that Lonergan affirmed something beyond the fourth level of human consciousness, and he distinguished between levels one through four, which have questions as operators, and the fifth level, the operator of which is not a question.” According to Blackwood, Dunne’s emphasis when discussing the fifth level is on its constitution of “the subject as a term of an interpersonal relation,” which is not the case on the four lower levels. Dunne suggests that Lonergan saw a similarity between the effect of “our families, friends and communities … on consciousness” and “the draw of God’s own self-communication in Word and Spirit.” Patrick Byrne, similarly, recognizes “the possibility of a fifth level,” according to Blackwood. Byrne “emphasized the underlying self-presence of the subject, as distinguished (but not separated) from the subject’s operations”; in this context, a fifth

38 Ibid.
level is possible “insofar as the subject as subject can perform operations out of a self-presence characterized as the state of being in love unrestrictedly.”

In short, while all four of these scholars recognize at least the possibility of speaking about religious experience as entailing a fifth level of consciousness, there is significant disagreement about whether a fifth level should actually be affirmed, and if so, exactly what this would mean or include. Blackwood turns to the newly discovered archival material, as noted earlier, in order to “clarify the answer” to these questions.

2.2.2.2. New Evidence on the Fifth Level according to Blackwood’s Account

Based on his analysis of the archival material from the 1977 Lonergan Workshop, Blackwood derives four key points that he believes come out clearly in the question session. Perhaps most fundamentally, he claims that (1) Lonergan “clearly maintains that religious experience is fifth-level as over-against fourth-level.” That this is Lonergan’s meaning is made “very clear,” in Blackwood’s interpretation, by “Lonergan’s tone in the audio,” complemented by unpublished notes in which Blackwood sees Lonergan most clearly explaining the distinctness of the fifth level: “The proper understanding of the fifth level as a distinct level, was best explained in Lonergan’s typewritten notes where ‘love’ was explained in language that Lonergan did not get


44 See Appendix.


46 Ibid., n. 39.
use [sic] in his oral remarks: there, he wrote that ‘love is subjectivity linked to others.’

Developing this point about the fifth level of consciousness, Blackwood argues (2) that we should see the relation between the fifth and fourth levels as not “significantly different from the relation between the fourth and third, the third and second, or the second and first,” because “Lonergan explicitly affirms that the relation between this fifth level of love and the fourth level of deliberation parallels the relation between higher and lower levels in the already-accepted levels of consciousness.” In other words, just as the fourth level sublates the third, and so on, the fifth level is seen as sublating the fourth (and thus all others).

About the content of the fifth level, Blackwood claims (3) that in Lonergan’s view, the experience of love is “a conscious experience” focused on “the concrete ‘other’ who is the object” of this experience: “Love is constituted as the relation between the conscious subject performing the operation of love and the other whom that operation intends … The fifth level is constituted insofar as the subject operating is also operated on; it is a union of object and intending operator.” Spelling out what it means for the subject to also be operated on, Blackwood quotes Doran, who explains that “the reception of the love of another person for us changes us in such a way as to enable us to perform operations and experience states which previously were not within our capacity … [and] the love of another person for us is somehow constitutive of us.” Finally, and elaborating on the nature of love, Blackwood (4) takes

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47 Ibid., 154.
48 Ibid.
49 Cf. Doran, *Trinity*, 125: “The social dimensions of grace are rooted in a level of consciousness that is beyond the four levels of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision, and that sublates them.”
Lonergan’s claim that “God’s gift of his love is the agape that sublates eros,” and interprets this as meaning that “self-oriented desire is sublated by self-giving desire; one’s desire becomes constituted by the benefit of the other rather than by the benefit of the self.”

Blackwood finds further confirmation for the existence of a fifth level of consciousness, as well as details about the love that constitutes it, based on his analysis of the archival material from the 1980 Lonergan Workshop. Blackwood says: “Here Lonergan insists that he has moved in the direction of distinguishing a fourth and a fifth level for ten years (since about 1970). Moreover, one cannot miss Lonergan’s clear insistence that he considers there to be five levels,” namely the four commonly accepted ones plus the fifth level of “falling in love.” The fifth level, Blackwood explains, “is subdivided into (or at least encompasses) domestic, civil, and religious loves, and it is characterized as the level of self-transcendence, self-forgetting, the level at which the subject is no longer thinking of him- or herself.”

Doran’s agreement with Blackwood’s analysis is, as we have noted, clear in *The Trinity in History*, where he not only explicitly states that he finds Blackwood’s account “convincing” in general, but also seconds several of Blackwood’s specific claims. For example, Doran claims that Lonergan “explicitly subdivides the so-called fifth level into domestic, civil, and religious interpersonal community of love, where the beloved ones are in the consciousness of the lover by reason of love alone. That love always begins as a gift from others, human or divine.”

52 Lonergan, 91600DTE070 (see Appendix). Qtd. in Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 153.
54 Ibid., 155.
55 Doran, *Trinity*, 130.
loves, and characterizes it as ‘the level of [total] self-transcendence, self-forgetting, the level at which the subject is no longer thinking of him- or herself.’” 56

2.2.3. Developing the Fifth-Level Operation, Question, and Object

After examining the newly discovered archival material, Blackwood proceeds to give “a fuller account of the structure of the fifth level” including “the identification of a fifth-level operation, a fifth-level question, and fifth-level object, so that the structure of the entire elevated subject might be acknowledged.” 57

Blackwood traces his identification of a fifth-level operation back to comments made by Lonergan himself in the archival material from the 1980 Lonergan Workshop, where “he characterized the fifth level as ‘falling in love,’ a description immediately followed in the typewritten notes with the parenthetical notation ‘(complete self-transcendence).’” 58 Blackwood recognizes that every cognitional operation involves self-transcendence, but claims that

Lonergan specifically identifies the operation of the fifth level as complete self-transcendence, and it is this completeness that distinguishes it from the self-transcendence of the previous four levels. This complete self-transcendence, which he also identifies there as “self-forgetting” and “no longer thinking only of oneself,” I would identify as the giving of one’s whole self or ‘self-gift’ … [L]ove is the self-possessed handing over of one’s central form to the determination of another.” 59

56 Ibid. Brackets in the original; Doran inserts the word “total” in brackets to Blackwood’s original sentence, suggesting that he wishes to clarify and stress the idea that Lonergan characterizes this level as the level of total self-transcendence. This aspect of the fifth level will be clarified in what follows.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
The fifth-level operation, then, is complete loving self-donation to another, subdivided into complete loving self-giving to other human beings and complete loving self-giving to God. Doran, similarly, can be seen as spelling out to some extent what this loving self-donation entails when he notes that “This unitative and inclusive level of consciousness is interpersonal, and when self-transcendent it is marked by love in intimacy, in devotion to the human community, and in reception of God’s love and the return of love for God in charity.”

Blackwood identifies the question involved in the fifth level of consciousness as “What would you have me do?” and argues that it is manifested in “all three of Lonergan’s examples of love,” namely domestic, civil, and religious loves:

In the love of community, one asks what the community would have one do in order to be an authentic member of the community. In terms of the love between spouses, one seeks to give oneself to one’s spouse by asking the same question. Finally, in one’s relationship to God, one asks what God would have one do in order to know, for example, one’s vocation or the proper theological-ethical position to take on a given issue. If the operation is the complete handing over of one’s central form to an other, the question seeks to specify the content of that handing over; in other words, it seeks to know what one is to do to make one’s whole being subservient to that other.

This fifth-level question is then asked in any case of love, whether in the “natural” dimension, where the question is addressed to other human beings, or in the “supernatural” dimension of love, where it is addressed to God.

60 Doran, Trinity, 125. This division will be revisited in Section 2.3.1, below; however, it is derived essentially from the fact that the fifth level is subdivided into (at least) domestic, civil, and religious loves, as noted above.

Since the fifth level is the level of love, Blackwood emphasizes its interpersonal nature, or in other words its intersubjectivity – its concern “with other subjects, not as objects, but as subjects.” Therefore, the object of love, he explains, “is persons as persons, and as elevated, the object of the fifth level of love remains interpersonal, but it becomes an absolutely supernatural personal object – namely, the divine persons of the Trinity.” In other words, on a simple level the object of the fifth level of consciousness is another person; however, there are really two objects of this level: In the natural realm, the object is another human being (or human beings). In the supernatural realm, when the level is “elevated,” the object is disproportionate to the operation performed by the subject; this object is interpreted as being the Trinitarian persons.

2.3. Analysis and Critique
It would be helpful at this point to briefly analyze the key features of the fifth level of consciousness as presented by Blackwood and Doran. Thus this section is both an attempt to clearly outline the specific characteristics of the fifth level so far laid out here, primarily through Blackwood’s article, and to deepen and extend these points by contextualizing them against other claims that both Doran and Blackwood make about human and divine love and the fifth level. My intention in doing this is to bring out as clearly as possible the nature of the fifth level and the relationship between human and divine love in Blackwood and Doran’s account, in order to prepare a ground on which to suggest an alternative.

My analysis of Doran and Blackwood’s view here includes some interpretation, particularly on points that seem not to be spelled out fully yet in their still-developing account. The fifth level is characterized as a trans-intentional and interpersonal level of love (in both

62 Ibid., 159.
human and divine forms); as sublating all lower levels of consciousness; as involving complete self-transcendence in both human and divine realms of love; and, in its elevated form (divine love), as a case of fulfillment of the transcendental intentions and the ability to meet evil with good. These characteristics are linked to each other in complex ways, and in what follows, I will attempt to bring out some of these connections while examining each characteristic in turn. Finally, in Section 2.3.2, I will suggest an alternative which will be spelled out in Chapter 3.

2.3.1. Key Features of the Level of Love

First, according to Blackwood the fifth level is unique in the sense that it is trans-intentional. Revisiting Vertin’s distinction between “strict” and “wide” senses of the term “level,” Blackwood suggests at the end of his article that this distinction “pertains to their type of intentionality – proper intentionality on the one hand, and [in the case of the fifth level] trans-intentionality on the other.”63 Blackwood himself seems to consciously adopt the “wide” sense of the term, since he does affirm the existence of a fifth level, but he grants that the intention of this fifth level “is not, strictly speaking, immanently generated but is open to alterity,”64 as it involves “a self-possessed handing over of one’s central form to the determination of another.”65 Thus what is most distinctive about the fifth level is its interpersonal nature.66

More specifically, loving is the form that this “handing over” or “self-gift” takes, or (perhaps more precisely) Blackwood and Doran’s interpretation of what it means. However, as

63 Ibid., 160.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 162.
66 The fundamental nature of this characteristic seems to be based in part on the fact that the newly discovered archival material shows that the level of love includes both human and divine love, and consequently what is particularly distinctive of this level must be what makes both types of love different from the other four levels.
we have noted, Doran and Blackwood divide the fifth level into natural and supernatural realms, depending on whether the object in question is human or divine (and therefore whether the love in question is human or divine). In his dissertation, Blackwood insists quite strongly on this division, stating that “the fifth level need not be supernatural,” and that “[o]nce that affirmation is made, the elements of love having to do with the supernatural and those having to do with the natural can be distinguished. Moreover, statements by Lonergan or others that seem to compress the two realms into one another can be adjudicated.”\textsuperscript{67} Thus, the fifth level is most fundamentally the level of all loving interpersonal relations, both with other human beings and with God.

Not surprisingly, given this fifth-level openness to the other, the self-presence of the subject who operates in total loving self-donation is different from the self-presence of the subject operating (merely) on the other levels. Thus Blackwood commends Byrne for “grasp[ing] the fundamental point: that the solution to [the problem of the fifth level of consciousness] lay in considering the subject as subject.”\textsuperscript{68} For Blackwood, this emphasis on “the underlying self-presence of the subject, as distinguished (but not separated) from the subject’s operations” is part of what allows Byrne to consider possible a fifth level where “the subject as subject can perform operations out of a self-presence characterized as the state of being in love unrestrictedly.”\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{67} Jeremy W. Blackwood, “Love and Lonergan’s Cognitional-Intentional Anthropology: An Inquiry on the Question of a ‘Fifth Level of Consciousness’” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2012), 251. As stated earlier (see n. 1, above), I recognize that this dissertation is as yet unpublished, and thus I do not wish to rely overly heavily on it. However, it does not take a significantly different perspective from the article “Sanctifying Grace, Elevation, and the Fifth Level of Consciousness” on any point which the two pieces share, and thus it can be reasonably understood to be a refinement and expansion of the ideas presented in the earlier article. In addition, it is an important resource since it represents the most recent form of Blackwood’s thought on this issue. For these reasons, it seems justifiable to make cautious use of it in order to clarify and deepen central points.

\textsuperscript{68} Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 160.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 150-51. Blackwood indicates in a footnote that these references can be found in Patrick H. Byrne, “Consciousness: Levels, Sublations, and the Subject as Subject,” \textit{Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies} 13 (1995): 141.
Blackwood’s emphasis on *trans-intentionality* appears to make use of, or at least mirror, this distinction regarding the nature of the subject’s self-presence.

Although Blackwood clearly differs from Vertin in his affirmation of a fifth level in the first place, he sees himself as largely agreeing with Vertin on what is actually happening in sanctifying grace,\(^\text{70}\) which Blackwood connects closely to the fifth level. He quotes Vertin’s explanation of how “ordinary operations” become “religious ones, operations radically both motivated and oriented and normed by the feeling of unrestricted being in love,” arguing that Vertin is here “witnessing to the distinction between the elevated and unelevated formal objects of the operations.”\(^\text{71}\) Thus part of Blackwood’s understanding of the fifth level is that it *sublates* the fourth and all lower levels of consciousness, informing and transforming all of the lover’s operations in the lower levels. This occurs in both the divine (i.e. elevated, supernatural) and the human (i.e. unelevated, natural) realms of the fifth level; however, the effect in each case is different. Specifically, as we have seen, elevation only occurs with the addition of “an absolutely supernatural formal object,” or in other words when the subject’s act attains “an object which cannot fully be accounted for in terms of that act”;\(^\text{72}\) therefore, it occurs only in the case of divine love. Human love, while it also sublates the other levels of consciousness, does not involve such an elevation since there is no added supernatural object. Again, then, Blackwood emphasizes the

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\(^{70}\) Though not on how sanctifying grace can take place, since Vertin’s conception of the relationship between sanctifying grace and human love is importantly different from Blackwood’s or Doran’s. This should become clear in Chapter 3.


\(^{72}\) Ibid., 161.
need for a clear “distinction between the fifth level per se and the elevation of central form,”
tracing the idea of elevation to Jacobs-Vandegeer.⁷³

Despite this strong distinction, however, it would be a mistake to overlook the considerable similarity in the function of divine and human love. Specifically, both types of love result in the subject’s complete self-transcendence,⁷⁴ as we saw above in Blackwood’s explanation of what he takes to be the fifth-level operation, where Lonergan’s note “(complete self-transcendence)” prompted Blackwood to claim that although all of the cognitional operations provide “example[s] of self-transcendence, Lonergan specifically identifies the operation of the fifth level as a complete self-transcendence, and it is this completeness that distinguishes it from the self-transcendence of the previous four levels.”⁷⁵ This complete self-transcendence is designated by Lonergan as “no longer thinking only of oneself,” and Blackwood explains it as “the giving of one’s whole self or ‘self-gift’” to another.⁷⁶ Doran, similarly, calls the fifth level “the level of total self-transcendence to another, whether in the love of intimacy or in love in the community or in the love of God, or in some combination of

⁷³ Ibid., 160.
⁷⁴ The quotes and the explanations provided throughout this work help us note that both Doran and Blackwood use terms such as “religious love” and “love of God” in a synonymous way. In fact, other passages from their works reveal that that we could add further terms to this list, including, for example, “divine love,” “supernatural love,” “religious experience,” and “disproportionate love.” Doran and Blackwood use these terms synonymously, and so do I. However, I do not mean exactly the same thing that Doran and Blackwood mean by these terms. The difference between their meaning of these terms and mine will become apparent in Chapter 3 of this work, where a main focus is the relation between human and divine love.
⁷⁶ Ibid.
These. Thus this complete self-transcendence is intrinsically linked to the interpersonal nature of the fifth level.

In fact, the complete character of the self-transcendence of human and divine love seems to be distinguished based on who the other is, namely either God, on the one hand, or some human being(s), on the other. This is not to say that the self-transcendence is complete in the one case and only partial in the other; rather, the complete self-transcendence of human love presumably entails a way of being in total self-donation to some human being, while the complete self-transcendence of divine love entails a way of being in total self-donation to God. Blackwood, as we have seen, stresses the distinction between the elevated or supernatural realm of the fifth level and the unelevated or natural realm. Once that distinction is clear, he notes, statements by Lonergan or others that seem to compress the two realms into one another can be adjudicated. Thus, for example, when Doran affirms that “the fifth level is the elevation of central form itself in complete self-transcendence to God,” we can

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77 Doran, *Trinity*, 341. In their respective treatments of the type of self-transcendence that occurs in the alleged fifth level of consciousness, Blackwood tends to describe such self-transcendence with the word “complete” while Doran tends to use the word “total”; however, they use these terms synonymously. Despite their obvious familiarity with each other’s work, neither Doran nor Blackwood ever tries to distinguish his terminology from that of the other, nor does either seem ever to insist that one of these two terms is more accurate. Instead, they quote freely from each other in ways that imply agreement. In fact, despite his tendency to use the word “total,” Doran occasionally says “complete” instead, affirming, for example, that “the fifth level is the elevation of central form itself in complete self-transcendence to God.” Doran, “Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling,” 193.

78 Using the language of complete self-transcendence is consistent with Lonergan’s published works as well, and not merely with the typewritten note that Blackwood uses here. In the context of Lonergan Studies, total self-transcendence sometimes refers to what a person experiences in the beatific vision. This is implied, for example, in Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 2, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 215. However, Lonergan himself also explicitly states that there is complete self-transcendence in religious experience; he asks, “What is religion but complete self-transcendence?” and describes a “self-transcendence that goes beyond itself … totally in religion.” See Lonergan, “Natural Knowledge of God,” 129-30.
distinguish the fifth level as such from a supernaturally elevated fifth level at which the subject is in *complete* self-transcendence to God.\textsuperscript{79}

The italicized word “complete” in the final sentence could give the impression that Blackwood holds that human love does not involve complete self-transcendence at all. However, interpreting this sentence in the context of Blackwood’s view as a whole, it is clear that what he means to stress is that divine love involves complete self-transcendence in relation to God, while human love does not. In this context, then, the italicized “complete” could imply that human love might involve *partial* self-transcendence toward God; Blackwood does not explicitly elaborate on this point in any depth either in his dissertation or in his article, although he does seem to gesture in this direction.\textsuperscript{80}

Although at times\textsuperscript{81} this complete self-transcendence appears to be part of the fifth level by the very nature of this level (as it is presented by Doran and Blackwood), at other points the self-transcendence seems to be present or not present, based on factors that are not entirely clear in their account. Doran’s “Thesis 20” from *The Trinity in History*, for example, declares the fifth level to be “unitive” and “interpersonal,” and adds that “*when* self-transcendent it is marked by love in intimacy, in devotion to the human community, and in the reception of God’s love and the return of love for God in charity.”\textsuperscript{82} This suggests, perhaps, that that complete self-transcendence requires that one respond wholly lovingly to the beloved, or in other words that the self-donation to the beloved involve one’s complete self. However, if this interpretation is


\textsuperscript{80} See, for example, Blackwood, “Love and Lonergan’s Cognitional-Intentional Anthropology,” 258.

\textsuperscript{81} E.g. see Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 158; Doran, *Trinity*, 341.

\textsuperscript{82} Doran, *Trinity*, 125. Emphasis added.
correct, then this level would share this characteristic with the lower four levels, where the extent to which one follows the transcendental imperatives is the criterion that determines whether or not a person undergoes self-transcendence. Nevertheless, what makes the self-transcendence of the fifth level complete is its relational character, through which one can enter into communion by freely receiving the love of another and loving in turn in a way that involves a complete self-donation, manifested in complete commitment to another.

However, one of the effects of divine love is the gratuitous experience of the initial satisfaction of the transcendental intentions – that is, the human unrestricted yearning for intelligibility, truth, and value – while the “natural realm,” of strictly human love, does not seem to have this same effect. Doran, for instance, says that “the gift of God’s love is the supernatural fulfillment of the obediential potency of nature, that is, of intentional consciousness as a principle of movement and rest in quest of the true meanings and a normative and nuanced scale of value.” He puts this same idea in slightly different terms when he presents “human attentiveness, intelligence, rationality, and moral responsibility pursuing the transcendental objectives of the intelligible, the true and the real, [and] the good” as the expression of “a natural desire for union with God,” and calls “the offer of the gift of God’s love, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit … the inchoate supernatural fulfillment” of this natural desire. Similarly,

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83 In fact, each case of self-transcendence by following the transcendental imperatives in one sense can also be considered to be a case of total self-transcendence, since in those instances one could undergo total self-transcendence in relation to a particular question, for example. Moreover, it another sense it can be said that whenever we execute a responsible decision can be considered to be a case of complete self-transcendence, since in those instances, in and through one’s responsible decisions one subsumes the other lowers levels and in addition one constitutes oneself through those decisions. See Lonergan, “What Are Judgments of Value?” in Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 17, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 144.

84 Doran, Trinity, 123.

85 Ibid., 77.
Blackwood claims in another work that divine love “is the fulfillment of our conscious subjectivity.”

It should be noted that although a simple understanding of the elevated fifth level makes the human subject the “lover” and God the “beloved,” Doran has twice here referred to the gift of God’s love. This is because he sees our own love as a response to love that has been given to us; he claims that “love always begins as a gift from others, human or divine.” This is important because it is specifically God’s gift of love that Doran presents as giving us the capacity not only to be consistently authentic by transcending ourselves through following the transcendental imperatives, but also to consistently fight evil with goodness. Doran affirms, “[M]y stress is on being on the receiving end of unqualified love as this gives rise to judgments of value that one would not utter were not one gifted this way. These judgments ‘spirate’ the universal willingness that alone can meet the problem of evil in self-sacrificing love.” Indeed, more concretely, Doran affirms that “consistent self-transcendence” – “striving for self-transcendence in all [we] do” – is “not possible without God’s grace, … the grace that enables the return of good for evil.” Thus, for Doran, it is the experience of an unqualified love – that is, divine love – that produces in us the universal willingness that is necessary “to meet the problem of evil in self-sacrificing love,” which implies that the complete self-transcendence of human love does not

87 Doran, Trinity, 114. Cf. 341.
88 Ibid., 225-26.
89 Ibid., 153.
90 Ibid., 84. See also Trinity 164, 215 (“Thesis 42”), 242, 260.
provide us with that “universal willingness” in the same way.\textsuperscript{91} Blackwood seems to be in total agreement with Doran on this point, since he alludes to the same idea: “The elevation of central form and the consequent horizon of loving elevate loving by allowing the subject to love with God’s love.”\textsuperscript{92} In fact, this passage seems to also show Blackwood agreement’s with Doran’s idea regarding the presence of two steps within religious experience, where one first receives God’s love and then, as a result, is able to love back in an unrestricted way; Doran understands this as referring to sanctifying grace, giving rise to the habit of charity.\textsuperscript{93}

Putting these various ideas together, then, it seems that for both Doran and Blackwood, although human love also involves a type of complete self-transcendence, the complete self-transcendence of divine love is the result of the gift of God’s love itself, which elevates the unity in all of one’s conscious-intentional operations, thereby allowing one to be consistently authentic, and to love with God’s love to the point of being able to overcome evil with self-sacrificing love.\textsuperscript{94}

2.3.2. Suggesting Another Route

Chapter 3 of this work will present a different interpretation and argue that although Doran and Blackwood are correct in their suggestion that one implication of these issues is that humans undergo complete self-transcendence in both human and divine love, their argument becomes less compelling when they imagine two types of complete self-transcendence, one for human

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\textsuperscript{91} Cf. \textit{Trinity}, 100, where Doran refers to “the elevating and healing divine grace that not only maintains one as consistently faithful to these precepts, but also stretches one to the love that returns good for evil.”


\textsuperscript{93} See also Doran, \textit{Trinity}, 152. Blackwood implies his agreement with Doran in “Sanctifying Grace,” 153, where he quotes Doran making this point.

\textsuperscript{94} See, e.g., Doran, \textit{Trinity}, 114, 151-53; Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 159.
love and one for divine love. Doran and Blackwood’s views are predicated on the assumption that the experience of human love and the experience of divine love are always two separate experiences. Thus, if the two types of self-transcendence involved do not coincide, then neither can their experiences of love. However, I will argue that these two experiences need not occur separate from one another in historical human living. We can understand this contrast, for example, as a theoretical distinction between two different ways of conceiving the dynamism of human affectivity: on the one hand, we could conceive a goal for human affectivity that is proportionately in relation to human nature and that consequently refers only to human love, and, on the hand, we could conceive another goal for human affectivity that is disproportionately in relation to human nature and that consequently refers only to divine love. Understanding human and divine love in this way allows us both to understand the possibility of their simultaneous occurrence in the concrete life of a human being and also permits us to make a meaningful distinction between the two.

Indeed, I will argue that it is possible that concrete experiences of so-called “human love” might implicitly presume the unrestricted dynamism that, only theoretically speaking, can be exclusively connected with the experience of divine love. I will thus argue that this contrast between human and divine love does not imply the existence of two experiences of love that are necessarily separate in human life; rather, the value of this contrast (as well as its deficiencies) consists in highlighting the meaning of religious experience from the perspective of different methodological approaches. In the next chapter, I will explain these claims and suggest some of their implications in relation to Doran and Blackwood’s ideas, as well as in relation to Lonergan’s account of religious experience, and to our general understanding of religious experience.
Chapter 3
Some Proposed Clarifications

3.1. Human and Divine Love

Let me begin with an example of an experience, which, for now, will not be placed in any specific category or given any particular label. Since early on in my life, I have often felt emotionally captivated by the spontaneity and openness that children have; I can say that I have always liked children in general. However, it was only during my first practicum in teacher’s college, when I was 28 years old, that I met a child who allowed me to experience myself as a person who could potentially be a parent.

James was a six year old in my assigned grade one class during my month-long practicum. During this time, we both grew in our liking of each other and in our enjoyment of interacting with each other. At the end of the last day of my practicum, all of the kids lined up to say good-bye, and when it was James’ turn, he gave me a hug and made the not-so-typical gesture of giving me a spontaneous kiss when he hugged me. At that moment I became aware of the fact that I might really have loved this child. Once alone in the classroom and reflecting on my time with these students, my imagination wandered and I realized that if James had needed to be adopted, I would have adopted him! I thought that I really could have made my love for this child into the centre of my responsibility as an adult person. I walked to the bus stop thinking about this new realization – the realization that I could enjoy living as a parent to this child. While walking I began to think more concretely about whether or not I would really have

95 By doing this I hope to draw attention to the experience itself, decreasing the chance that it will be associated too quickly with any common labels or categorizations. My aim in proceeding in this way is to facilitate the possible recognition of important commonalities between this example and the reader’s own.
adopted him if he had needed it, as well as whether I would have even been considered qualified to do it. I had to think about it, because I wanted to think of whether I could really have done it. I concluded that I could have. Would I really want to do it, though, if I were given the option? After some pause, I found myself happily saying yes. I felt a peaceful joy; I felt connected with what was and is truly most important to me.

Going back to this experience now, I remember how important it was for me to consider whether adopting James would have been a truly good thing. I remember asking myself whether this would have been good for him, for me, and for everybody. This “good for him, me, and for everybody,” I realize now, entailed a disposition to care about producing (at least in principle) good consequences to everyone. But why did I care about this good for everyone? After all, it seems, at least at first glance, like it would have been enough for it to be good for the child and for me. But this caring for everyone did not come primarily from a concern to do what is “right,” in the sense of trying to respect some external law or rule; this caring came as a given disposition to care about everything. Keeping in mind this realization, we can now continue examining this experience in light of Lonergan’s ideas on human and divine love.

In Lonergan’s account, the main difference between human love and religious experience is that the latter, presented as being in love with God, is experienced as “being in love in an unrestricted fashion. All love is self-surrender, but being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations.”

In contrast, we normally think of human love as limited to particular objects, as well as being subject to the restrictions of human

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finitude: individuals die, and circumstances change.\textsuperscript{97} Lonergan seems to endorse this contrast. He mentions, for instance, couple love and parental love as classic examples of human love, and introduces them in contrast to the unrestricted nature of being in love with God,\textsuperscript{98} saying for example that “[t]o love any creature in that fashion would be idolatry.”\textsuperscript{99} So, in light of this contrast, and in light of the example I have presented above, we might ask, what really happens when we “love” someone?

In our love of another human being, we experience a certain desire to freely give to this person all that is good. In other words, we desire the well-being of this person in all ways, and in principle we are willing to do everything we can to ensure this well-being. Thus there is already an element of unrestrictedness in our love for a human being, despite the fact that in other senses human love is of course restricted by the conditions of human nature and has, in Lonergan’s words, “its antecedents, its causes, its conditions, its occasions.”\textsuperscript{100} The other person becomes our concern to such an extent that his or her happiness becomes the main source of our own happiness.

Moreover, our love can also be unrestricted in a further sense, in that our love for someone can include an implicit appreciation of everything that can be lovable. So although there is a limited \textit{cause} for our love (the particular person), the \textit{effect} is unlimited (namely, the

\textsuperscript{97} See Blackwood, “Love and Lonergan’s Cognitional-Intentional Anthropology,” 120, where Blackwood quotes oral remarks in which Lonergan mentions that a “restriction” on human love is that beloved individuals die.

\textsuperscript{98} See, for example, Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 105. Similarly, in 240 he refers to religious conversion as “other-worldly falling in love.”


\textsuperscript{100} Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 105.
goal of our love is, in principle, everything). The example above can help us explain how it is that our love for the individual beloved might invite us to go beyond the individual, to a love of all. We should note that in the example above it was not the person of James who caused that spontaneous concern for everything, but rather it was my love for him. But in what sense am I pushed beyond the limitations of purely individual, and in that sense preferential, love – pushed beyond, that is, by that very love itself?

I would approach this question by proposing that when we experience parental love (or, as in my example, a parental-type love), then we might, for instance, be more easily sympathetic to parents who love their children too. Concretely, then, when we feel love for a child, we might implicitly recognize the value of all children. If I am a parent, I happen to love my own child, but all children are lovable in the same way. In one sense, there was nothing special about James; his individual qualities were not intrinsically incomparable to the individual qualities of other children. I just happened to develop a special connection with him, to an extent that I did not happen to do with other children in that class; however, under other circumstances, I certainly could have developed this connection with another student. Ultimately, what makes my child (if I am a parent) like every other child is his ability to love and be loved. So if I am authentic in my loving, then my love for my own child will lead in an implicit but still quite direct way to my recognition of the equal value of all children. In fact, if we do not feel this love for all children, then we do not really love our own child either – at least not authentically. This might manifest itself, for example, in someone’s recognition that lacking sensitivity for another child feels like a betrayal of the love he has for his own child. Indeed, any mistreatment – of anyone, and not just of a child – might be recognized as a betrayal of the love we have for our own child. Again, then, an unrestricted character seems to become manifest in one’s love for one’s own child.
Now, just as there is nothing special about James, there is nothing special about children; the point I have just made applies equally to our love of a spouse, or a friend, or anyone else. The idea is that an authentic love, for anyone, might potentially include a “universal” side, in that it might invite us to recognize the value of everything that is lovable. Loving another human being is always framed by the limitations of human living, namely by contexts and circumstances and individual differences, and it is not that we should try to ignore these completely; the point is simply that, as lovers, we must not remain entirely limited by such contingencies.

Against this backdrop we can understand in a clearer way what religious experience means. Lonergan describes religious experience as a “being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations.”101 I am suggesting – now moving into the territory of labels – that this unrestricted character of “divine love” can be implicitly present in that unrestricted affective orientation described in the example above. Thus, acting moved by such a comprehensive orientation, as in the story above, can be an expression of the “religious” acting that entails being moved by the gratuitous unrestrictedness of so-called religious experience. Thus, in my view the story above might be an experience of that “easy freedom of those that do all good because they are in love,”102 which according to Lonergan is characteristic of what he calls an experience of God’s love.103 In other words, I can recognize episodes of my own lived experience, such as that narrated above, in Lonergan’s words: “Because it is a dynamic state of being in love, it opens one’s eyes to values and disvalues that otherwise would not be recognized, and [that] gives the power to do the good that otherwise would not be attempted.”

101 Ibid., 106.
102 Ibid., 107.
103 Ibid. Emphasis added.
The gratuitous experience of this “dynamic state of being in love” is for Lonergan “religious experience.”

Returning now to Lonergan’s contrast between human and divine love, and in light of the reflections above, I will suggest that concrete experiences of human love can reveal both a distinctive affective dynamism towards a proportionate object (a person) and the fact that such a dynamism is a specific, concrete instantiation of a larger dynamism that we experience simply as a gift, that is wholly unrestricted (disproportionate relative both to ourselves as lovers and to the person we are loving, as the specific “object” of this love at the moment). We can come to be aware of this gratuitous unrestricted dynamism as being constitutive of who we are, and as including within it (since it is absolutely unrestricted) every possible proportionate dynamism.

Thus, I have introduced the possibility that religious experience might be implicitly present in some concrete experiences of so-called “human love.” So far, however, our examination of Lonergan’s views on religious experience in this chapter have taken place primarily in connection with ideas about what constitutes “loving,” and thus this examination has so far entailed a psychological approach. This is to say, when Lonergan conceives this experience as an experience of “unrestricted being in love,” he is drawing on some common psychological understandings about what it means, for example, to undergo the event of “falling

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105 Lonergan’s claim that religious conversion is existentially prior to, and leads to, moral and intellectual conversion can lend further support to this idea. Lonergan explains: “Though religious conversion sublates moral, and moral conversion sublates intellectual, one is not to infer that intellectual comes first and then moral and finally religious. On the contrary, from a causal viewpoint, one would say that first there is God’s gift of his love. Next, the eye of this love reveals values in their splendor, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion” (Method, 243).
in love” with another person, to find oneself in a state of “being in love” with someone, and, more generally, to say that one “loves” another person or “is loved” by another person. As mentioned above, the key idea here is that while human love involves a gratuitous affective disposition towards some other person or persons and thus that disposition is always restricted to some particular people, the experience of “divine love,” in contrast, involves a gratuitous affective disposition that is wholly unrestricted. To examine this experience at a deeper level, nevertheless, we should now unpack a phenomenological — in the sense developed by Lonergan — way of talking about this experience, distinguishing clearly the differences between these two methodological approaches, which in Lonergan’s own account (and in the various accounts given in recent Lonergan scholarship) are often intertwined. When Lonergan conceives this experience in terms of self-transcendence — that is, in relation to the structural features of human consciousness — then we have a phenomenological approach to what this experience entails.

3.2. From Psychology to Phenomenology of Religious Experience

Although the distinction between studying religious experience through a phenomenological approach, on the one hand, and through a psychological perspective, on the other, is often blurred in Lonergan’s account, this distinction is not a novelty in Lonergan studies. Lonergan himself, in fact, calls for the examination of religious experience from multiple perspectives, distinguishing between phenomenological and psychological approaches among others. He says that religious experience is

something exceedingly simple, and, in time, also exceedingly simplifying, but it also is something exceedingly rich and enriching. There are needed studies of religious interiority: historical, phenomenological, psychological, sociological. There is needed in
the theologian the spiritual development that will enable him both to enter into the experience of others and to frame the terms and relations that will express that experience.¹⁰⁶

In the Lonerganian sense of the term, phenomenology studies the universal and invariant structures of human consciousness; in contrast, psychology studies the various historically-bound manifestations of those structures. Thus, doing psychology of religious experience identifies possible commonalities that can be used as evidence to establish empirically-based generalizations of those manifestations across human experience¹⁰⁷; on the other hand, doing phenomenology of religious experience entails giving certain descriptions of one’s own affectivity revealed in one’s religious structural functioning, which might be “tested” by others in their own subjectivity – suggesting, of course, in what ways this testing might be possible.¹⁰⁸

This distinction between phenomenological and psychological features of religious experience, and my suggestion that this distinction is often blurred in Lonergan’s own account, are echoed in the following passage by Frederick Crowe, where he speaks about two aspects of consciousness – he calls them “structural” and “historical” – and how this distinction needs better differentiation in Lonergan studies. Crowe says:


¹⁰⁷ For example, I would suggest that Friedrich Heiler’s seven areas that are common across various world religious, commonalities which Lonergan refers to and which he sees as implicit in the unrestrictedness of religious experience, are instances of these empirically-based psychological generalizations, which exemplify the effect of religious experience upon the structures of human consciousness. See Method, 109, and Friedrich Heiler, “The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Co-operation of Religions,” in The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology, ed. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 142-52.

¹⁰⁸ The specificities regarding the structural features of human deliberation and action, such as the role of feelings in the apprehension of values or in “deliberative insights” (in Michael Vertin’s terminology) is still an area of development in Lonergan scholarship. It is clear, then, that how religious experience affects the level of deliberation and action is also an area of development. Patrick Byrne and Michael Vertin, for example, have new developments on the topic of feelings and apprehensions of values in new publications, soon to appear.
The expansion I call for now is the addition of the historical aspect of consciousness to the structural, where “addition” means merely bringing into focus what has been repeatedly touched on in Lonergan’s writings, or means giving a distinct recognition and its own technical name to what has long been present … First, then, the structural side of consciousness is clear enough: it is constituted by the four levels that are its invariant factor, enabling us to organize our conscious activity according to the categories of attention, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility. But the historical aspect is the variable factor: it refers to what happens on any level of the structure and happens in variety, now one way and now another; or, we might say it refers to what fills the structure, and fills it in a multitude of diverse combinations, with different degrees of emphasis, and so on … [Historical features of consciousness can include] the innumerable brands of common sense, the variety of the differentiations of consciousness, the different forms of conversion and the several possible states consequent on the presence or absence of any particular conversion, the two ways of human development¹⁰⁹ and the changing ratios of emphasis they receive at different times or among diverse peoples and cultures. This diversity, I say, is already at hand in Lonergan’s writings; in fact, many of the items listed above can be found in a single paragraph of *Method*.¹¹⁰

Crowe notes, however, that the various historical features of consciousness “are mingled indiscriminately” in Lonergan’s writings

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¹⁰⁹ what Crowe calls the way of “achievement” and the way of “heritage.”

with the structural elements. They need to be distinguished, separated out, brought under one generalized heading, seen as pertaining to one general historicality of consciousness itself and as set in contrast with the general structural side of consciousness. To be noted: though the states are many and diverse and no one can combine the totality of states in one consciousness, nevertheless the consciousness of everyone is marked with the underlying historicality that gives rise to the many states, to some states in this person and to others in that.  

In line with Crowe’s suggestion, then, I am proposing that some of those historical features of human consciousness possess a psychological character, and therefore the study of such features is governed by an empirical methodology: the psychological approach to religious experience seeks to establish empirical commonalities among different accounts of this experience that stress the way this experience is undergone in the subjectivity of the person, and is manifested in her actions, as she is affected by her specific historicity, culture, development, and so on. Moreover, while the previous passage has, I hope, explained sufficiently what I mean by “psychological features” of religious experience, the following passage, also from Crowe, but this time drawing more directly on Lonergan, explains more extensively what a Lonerganian phenomenological investigation entails. Crowe affirms:

Lonergan’s definition of phenomenology, brief and simple, shows at once his personal approach: ‘It is an account, description, presentation of data structured by insight.’ He enlarged this definition in the following four points. The data, or what is manifest, may be external or internal; there are no exclusions on principle. Still phenomenology is

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111 Crowe, “Lonergan’s Notion of Value,” 357.
selective, it attends to significant data, seeking universal structures; so it calls for
scrutiny, it takes time and effort. Thirdly, though it is an account structured by insight, it
does not undertake a phenomenology of the extremely elusive insight itself and as such.
And fourthly, it is an account of the data and not the subsequent conceptualization.112

Elaborating on this fourth point, Crowe adds that in Lonergan’s writings, “There is great
insistence on the prepredicative, instead of conceptualizations of it, as the proper area for
phenomenology.”113 Thus, a phenomenological approach seeks to uncover what Crowe calls the
structural features of human consciousness in contrast to what he calls its historical features.

Vertin makes a similar point in different terms when he notes that the type of evidence
that phenomenology appeals to is “methodologically prior to any empirical consideration
whatsoever, namely, the evidence constituted by operational elements that are intrinsic to my
concrete performance.”114 Vertin further explains what a Lonerganian phenomenology entails in
the following way:

By the phenomenal features of the cognitional process I mean its apparent features, the
features whose articulation is sought by Lonergan’s ‘first basic question.’ … By
(cognitional) phenomenology I mean the enterprise of articulating the phenomenal
features of the cognitional process – the enterprise of answering the ‘first basic question.’

112 Frederick E. Crowe, “For a Phenomenology of Rational Consciousness,” in Lonergan and the Level of Our
Time, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 79-80.
113 Ibid., 80 n. 10. See also Bernard Lonergan, Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on
Mathematical Logic and Existentialism, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 266-69.
114 Michael Vertin, “Lonergan’s ‘Three Basic Questions’ and a Philosophy of Philosophies,” Lonergan Workshop 8

Thus, a phenomenological examination of religious experience from a Lonerganian perspective analyzes this experience in terms of the apparent (i.e. immediate) effect of religious experience upon the structural features of consciousness. This presupposes, of course, a consideration of the structures of consciousness in the first place – specifically the four types of conscious-intentional operations rooted in the unrestricted human yearning for all that is intelligent, true, and good. Also central, therefore, are the transcendental intentions just mentioned (as the goals of this unrestricted yearning) and the transcendental imperatives which guide and norm the conscious-intentional operations. This then connects to religious experience specifically since Lonergan sees this unrestricted orientation as “our capacity for self-transcendence,” and describes “being in love in an unrestricted fashion [as] the proper fulfilment of that capacity.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 106.}

The quotation just given provides a good example of the mixing of psychological and phenomenological language in Lonergan’s own writing, since it brings together the language of self-transcendence and the language of love. Based on the above elucidations of Crowe and
Vertin, however, it now becomes clearer that when Lonergan says, “I have conceived religious experience as an ultimate fulfillment of man’s capacity for self-transcendence,” namely as “the supreme realization of the transcendental notions of intelligence, truth, [and] goodness,” he is drawing on a phenomenological methodology and giving an account of what religious experience is from a phenomenological perspective. This is to say, we actualize our capacity for self-transcendence – undergoing cognitive and affective fulfillment – through that gratuitous experience. On the other hand, when Lonergan says, “Religious experience at its root is [the] experience of an unconditioned and unrestricted being in love,” he is giving a psychological interpretation of this experience in similar fashion to various other psychological accounts, such as for example Paul Tillich’s “being grasped by ultimate concern” and Rudolph Otto’s “mysterium fascinans et tremendum,” which Lonergan commonly cites in his accounts of religious experience. Interpreting religious experience as an experience of love emphasizes the gratuity of this experience – the fact that it is “not the product of our knowing and choosing” – as well as some of the common psychological and behavioural correlates of it, such as “love, joy, [and] peace,” manifested “in acts of kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.”

117 Lonergan, “Faith and Beliefs,” 45.
118 See, e.g., Crowe, “Lonergan’s Notion of Value,” 351, where Crowe describes the “upward movement of consciousness” as showing “a capacity for self-transcendence,” while “being in love with God is the actuality of self-transcendence.” Emphasis in the original. This language of capacity and actuality is helpful in that it stays more strictly phenomenological, by avoiding the connotation of psychological affective satisfaction that can come along with a term like “fulfillment.” Lonergan himself does also use the language of capacity and actuality; see, for example, Lonergan, Method, 105.
120 See, e.g., Lonergan, Method, 106.
121 Ibid.
In fact, the distinction we have just emphasized, between phenomenological and psychological interpretations of religious experience, does not yet cover all of the possible methodological approaches that Lonergan employs in discussing this experience. Lonergan’s account of religious experience in terms of love is also based on a Christian theological approach, and indeed, Lonergan himself makes reference to this. He says: “From a specifically Christian viewpoint, I have characterized the total commitment of religious living as ‘being in love in an unrestricted manner’; I have associated it with St Paul’s statement that ‘God’s love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us’ (Romans 5.5).” More broadly, it should be noted that the label “religious experience” already implies a theological lens. Thus whenever Lonergan speaks of this experience as not simply an experience of “unrestricted love,” but also an experience that is “religious,” and more specifically says that it entails a “religious” or “divine” love – God’s love, which he identifies with the experience of the Holy Spirit – he is adding another layer of methodological interpretation to the more basic ones already mentioned.

It is important to bring to light these three different layers of methodological approaches and their corresponding characterizations of religious experience, noting that these different methodological approaches have a hierarchical relationship, with each one based on the previous. More specifically, Lonergan’s Christian theological characterization (God’s love / Holy Spirit) incorporates his psychological characterization (unrestricted being in love), and that psychological characterization is in turn one psychological formulation – among many possible others – of the phenomenological characterization of this experience (i.e. the gratuitous

fulfillment of the transcendental intentions).\textsuperscript{123} It should be noted that, as mentioned above, the language of love has clear Christian connotations and thus speaking of this experience as an experience of “unrestricted being in love” can already be considered a Christian characterization of the experience. However, since non-Christians might also identify with this characterization, it is not essentially or necessarily Christian. Thus, speaking of an unrestricted being in love is primarily a psychological characterization of this experience, just like the formulations of Tillich and Otto mentioned above.

What this does show, however, is that the Christian theological characterization of this experience as an experience of “God’s love” is certainly based on a psychological way of describing this experience in terms of “unrestricted being in love.” Speaking of an experience of unrestricted being in love draws on the gratuitous affective dynamism of finding oneself in love with a person. This dynamism derives from feeling pulled towards a person; thus the language of fascination and attraction that Lonergan uses to explain the unrestricted dynamism of this experience. In this respect, for example, Crowe mentions how “Chapter 4 of Method … is largely the downward movement from the love of God as divine gift, to the effort to conceive the Giver of that love and render some account of the strange attraction we feel.”\textsuperscript{124} This language alluding to the dynamism of the power of attraction is found in Lonergan when he says that “Because it is being in love, the mystery is not merely attractive but fascinating; to it one belongs; by it one is possessed. Because it is unmeasured love, the mystery evokes awe.”\textsuperscript{125} This experience of

\textsuperscript{123} Obviously it is possible to arrive at other phenomenological characterizations too, but since the present study concerns the phenomenological account of religious experience in light of Lonergan’s hermeneutics of interiority, I will not attempt here a comparison of other phenomenological characterizations based on other authors’ phenomenologies.

\textsuperscript{124} Crowe, “Lonergan’s Notion of Value,” 352.

\textsuperscript{125} Lonergan, Method, 106.
unrestricted being in love is then one particular psychological formulation – among various possible others – of the most basic meaning of this experience, which is found at a phenomenological level. As indicated above, from a Lonerganian *phenomenological* approach, that most basic meaning or interpretation of this experience refers to the gratuitous fulfillment of the transcendental intentions (the gratuitous, supreme\(^{126}\) actualization of the human capacity for self-transcendence).

Nevertheless, just as all of our experiences, so far as we know, possess a neurological character (they utilize the nervous system and the brain), all of our experiences of data of awareness also possess a psychological character. Further, just as changes at a neurological level can potentially affect the way we experience the world, individual differences on the psychological level can and do affect the way we experience data of awareness, and even data of sense.\(^{127}\) Some of these variations in the ways we experience data of awareness exist due to differences in temperament, development, ideas, and so on. Specifically, as Crowe pointed out above, there are “several possible states consequent on the presence or absence of any particular conversion.”\(^{128}\) In other words, the various psychological *formulations* that are given as interpretations of the experience could be based on truly different *ways of experiencing* the data in our consciousness – i.e. in this case different *manifestations* of religious experience in human consciousness, across different individuals at different times. It is quite logical, then, that these various psychological formulations might stress different psychological features of this experience. These different interpretations, in turn, when they are well known to us and become

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\(^{126}\) Supreme in this life, at least; I follow Lonergan’s own use of this adjective (See, e.g., *Method*, 111).

\(^{127}\) To take a fairly simple example, some persons, for example those with synesthesia, experience colours and shapes differently from the common way of experiencing these. Of course this ultimately may be traceable to neurological differences as well, but it is unmistakably a psychological difference in perception.

part of our tradition, culture, and so on, can also become part of the “individual differences” that colour how we experience. In this way, they can play a role in generating particular manifestations in consciousness of these experiences.\textsuperscript{129} For example, a Christian’s association of love with God can have an effect on what she actually feels – what she actually experiences – when she helps the poor by volunteering at a soup kitchen. Lonergan seems to make a similar point when he speaks of a distinctly Christian religious experience:

The religious experience of the Christian is specifically distinct from religious experience in general. It is intersubjective. It is not only this gift of God’s love. It has an objective manifestation of God’s love in Christ Jesus. That intersubjective component creates a difference, and because it creates a difference, insofar as you advert to that intersubjective element in your love with Christ, you are proceeding from experience.

Your question is coming out of your experience. It is insofar as you are related to Christ as God.\textsuperscript{130}

Matthew Petillo also emphasizes the fact that religious experience is in important senses mediated through tradition, culture, and even simply language; however, he helpfully illuminates the phenomenological level at which experience is immediate – unmediated:

\textsuperscript{129} If this is true – and I think it is – then it could be part of the reason for the religious differences that Lonergan seems to acknowledge as legitimate in Method in Theology, in sections such as “Pluralism in Expression” and “Pluralism in Religious Language” (from Ch. 11, Foundations), and “The Historicity of Dogmas” and “Pluralism and the Unity of Faith” (from Ch. 12, Doctrines). Lonergan notes, for example, the variety of mystical experiences across world religions, from the “many mansions within Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle” to “the mysteries of Judaism, Islam, India, and the Far East” (Method, 273). Later, he contrasts the permanence of dogmas, based on the mysteries they reveal, with the historically contextual nature, and therefore possible changeability, of their formulation in statements (Method, 325-26). Even if what I have described above is not the reason behind these religious differences, it may be at least complementary to the bases of religious differentiation that Lonergan identifies in these and other sections of Method. I thank Professor Jeremy Wilkins for pointing out this connection to me.

Because these intentional activities of which one is tacitly aware regard objects that are brought to light by language, it is true the tacit experiences of first-intentional responses are, in some sense, by-products of linguistically structured cognitive activities. But religious experience does not only regard an object illumined by language; its compass includes the wordless and immediate presence of the term of self-transcendence. In some instances, guilt, forgiveness, gratitude are first intentional religious feelings that are structured, in some sense, by a prior set of interpretations. These feelings emerge within a horizon; the meanings and values embedded within the stories, rituals, symbols, and myths that constitute the external word of the Christian religion are the condition for their possibility. But the contents of other-worldly love, deep-set joy, and radical peace are not entirely dependent on practices or the apprehension of objects, both of which require language; these religious feelings, occurring in the immediacy of consciousness, transcend religious language. For Rahner and Lonergan, religious experience is not only pre-reflective but preverbal and pre-interpretive.¹³¹

Note that in the passage above it is the contents of “other-worldly love, deep-set joy, and radical peace” that are “not entirely dependent on practices or the apprehensions of objects.” What are those contents and why are they not dependent on the apprehension of objects? I am suggesting that these contents refer to the supreme affective fulfillment of our unrestricted yearning for value. In addition, in and through that fulfillment, these contents also refer to the supreme cognitive fulfillment of our unrestricted yearning for intelligibility and truth.¹³²


¹³² Vertin notes, indeed, that the transcendental intentions are only notionally different from each other: “[T]ranscendental intelligibility, reality, and value are the metaphysical correlates of my second-level, third-level,
Now, we can quickly realize upon reflection that our unrestricted yearning for intelligibility, truth, and value, is not actually entirely fulfilled. Thus, we can understand the phenomenological meaning of this experience as entailing the gratuitous experience of the *beginnings* of the complete fulfillment of the transcendental intentions – the “inchoative” or “incipient” total satisfaction mentioned, for example, by both Vertin and Doran. Moreover, it is for this reason that the unrestricted dynamism of God’s love does not entail extra components that could be somehow added to the unrestricted dynamism that we already have. Rather, that dynamism of unrestricted being in love is simply the gratuitously enriched yearning for all that is intelligent, true, and good, that has been transformed into an unrestricted yearning for *holy* intelligibility, reality, and value, so to speak. In other words, it is an “empowered” yearning for a friendly, loving, holy totality that is driven by the power of attraction of that which has given satisfaction to our restless hearts, and which is now what we yearn for *more of*. Hence, the phenomenological interpretation of religious experience refers to the gratuitous experience of the *beginnings* of the complete satisfaction of “our restless heart” – or in other words, of the *transcendental intentions*, to remain in Lonerganian phenomenological language.

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and fourth-level transcendental intentions respectively; and as the latter, so also the former are unitary. Moreover, the distinctions among these unitary metaphysical correlatives are merely notional, not real; for each correlative is really identical with the concrete universe of being, the totality of what-is. Transcendental intelligibility is the concrete universe viewed as intrinsically understandable. Transcendental reality is the concrete universe viewed as intrinsically affirmable. Transcendental value is the concrete universe viewed as intrinsically valuable” (Michael Vertin, “Lonergan’s Metaphysics of Value and Love: Some Proposed Clarifications and Implications,” in *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997): 193). Furthermore, when transformed into a transcendental intention of holiness, this also entails another only-notional distinction from the transcendental intentions: “Transcendental lovability is the metaphysical correlative of the religiously transformed transcendental intentions of intelligibility, affirmability, and valuability; but like the distinctions of transcendental intelligibility, affirmability, and valuability from one another, transcendental lovability’s distinction from them is not real but just notional” (Vertin, “Lonergan’s Metaphysics of Value and Love,” 213).

On the other hand, describing this fulfillment strictly as data of awareness, about which we have questions for understanding, we could say that this experience entails the gratuitous experience of the complete fulfillment of the transcendental intentions. Just as in an insight, for a moment, there is no subject-object distinction (since that cognitive act is identical with its content), we can say that the data of consciousness during religious experience entails no subject-object distinction. This is why there is neither object, nor proper intentionality, in religious experience. In other words, on the one hand, strictly as an experience, there is no subject-object distinction, while on the other hand, upon reflection, we are left with the same unrestricted yearning we always had, but it has now been gratuitously enriched by experiencing some of that which constitutes its total satisfaction. Thus, we can interpret that there is simply an unrestrictedness, a dynamism, “a room full of music,” as Lonergan expresses it in one passage. Consequently, we can say that, phenomenologically speaking, we can describe the data of

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134 Describing religious experience as data does not imply that, phenomenologically speaking, God is any true datum of human experience. See Lonergan, “Belief: Today’s Issue,” in A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J., ed. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 95. However, religious experience has an effect in consciousness that can be stated as data.


136 In my view, saying that there is a “disproportionate” object (as Blackwood affirms in “Sanctifying Grace,” 148) is equivalent to saying that there is no object; the allusion to “disproportionality” can be seen as essentially a way of understanding how there could be an orientation in intentional consciousness without an intended object. I think that it is for this reason that Lonergan speaks of religious experience as a dynamic state, in contrast with a feeling; namely, with that affirmation Lonergan means to stress the radical gratuitous character of religious experience as well as the radical unrestricted character of such a gratuitous affective orientation. Thus, this gratuitous orientation does not involve the experience of some object in our deliberative consciousness. Rather, this gratuitous orientation is our unrestricted capacity – our yearning – for the intelligent, true, and good, but is experienced differently: it is experienced as gratuitously undergoing its initial total fulfillment. Hence, I think that in religious experience there is a content in our deliberative consciousness – something is actually happening to us which is different from what occurs in our intentional consciousness when we seek the intelligent, the true, and the good – but this does not entail the experience of any particular object, phenomenologically speaking.

137 Describing religious experience, Lonergan takes an image from Olivier Rabut: “It is as though a room were filled with music though one can have no sure knowledge of its source. There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning; here and there it reaches a notable intensity; but it is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join. And join we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving.” Lonergan, Method, 290. See also Rabut, L’expérience religieuse fondamentale (Tournai: Casterman, 1969), 168.
consciousness in religious experience as data by saying that it refers to the gratuitous total fulfillment of the transcendental intentions, while we can also interpret that data as referring to the gratuitous, inchoative, total satisfaction of the transcendental intentions. Put differently, we can in the strictest sense describe the data of consciousness that is characteristic of religious experience simply as data, by saying that it entails the actualization of the human capacity for self-transcendence. On the other hand, we can interpret that data and thus affirm the meaning of the experience of such data by saying that it entails the beginnings of the actualization of the human capacity for self-transcendence.

3.3. Moving away from the Language of “Love”

In this way, then, I hope to have brought to light the significance of distinguishing clearly Lonergan’s different methodological approaches to religious experience and their correspondingly different characterizations. Noticing the relationship amongst the phenomenological, the psychological, and the Christian theological approaches and their corresponding characterizations of that experience as “the gratuitous fulfillment of the transcendental intentions,” “the experience of an unrestricted love,” and “the experience of God’s love/the Holy Spirit,” respectively, helps us recognize that “divine” love can certainly be present in and through instances of so-called “human” love. Specifically, “human” love can be “divine” when the gratuitous unrestrictedness that fulfills the heart is implicitly driving and norming our actions in relation to other people. Examining what we concretely do when we say we feel love for someone, which might include for example finding oneself curious, asking questions, and trying to ensure that our actions are responsible, may help us to see this unrestrictedness more clearly than when we try to understand our experience through psychological or theological lenses and labels.
In fact, my argument here has suggested that when examining religious experience, it is often (though certainly not always) unhelpful to speak in terms of love at all. At the very least it is unhelpful to fixate on or limit ourselves within the boundaries of the language of love, rather than delving into the more fundamental phenomenological level. This is true for at least three reasons. First, there is simply the fact that, as we have seen, “love” is a psychological interpretation and therefore, although not inaccurate as an account of what a given individual might be experiencing, it already utilizes concepts and distinctions implicit in common understandings of this word, or ideas about what love “should” entail (whether psychologically or theologically). This can lead to trying to read experience through the lenses of some already engrained understandings, rather than considering the experience itself in its concrete and preconceptual manifestation.\footnote{Cf. Petillo, “The Universalist Philosophy of Religious Experience,” 955.} This idea is not new in Lonergan scholarship. Lonergan himself explains that

\begin{quote}
a person can be religiously mature yet … he may be unable to associate any precise meaning with the words I have used; he may be too familiar with the reality of which I speak to connect it with what I say; he may be looking for something with a label on it, when he should simply be heightening his consciousness of the power working within him and adverting to its long-term effects.\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Method}, 290.}
\end{quote}

Second, and following on this first point, the vocabulary of love seems not to always be helpful in contexts where we might want to foster interreligious dialogue. Vertin correctly notes that
“[i]nsofar as … persons aspire to elucidate genuine religious commonalities, they ought to focus initially on concrete functional characterizations, avoiding the premature introduction of such words as “love.” Even such a seemingly transcultural notion as “love” (let alone “holiness” or “God”) is apt in fact to be culturally conditioned; hence, premature introduction of the word is likely to impede the dialogue.\textsuperscript{140}

This is not to say that non-Christians would not recognize their own experience as “love”; however, understandings of love vary, and even those who do see love as central to their religious lives may mean something different by it.\textsuperscript{141} For example, Matthew Petillo suggests that Christian and Buddhist understandings of love might be quite different from each other.\textsuperscript{142}

Third, even within the specifically Christian context, an overemphasis on love can obscure other varieties of experience that seem to be equally valid psychological manifestations and formulations of religious experience. Even Lonergan, when he uses the language of “unrestricted love,” often lists this together with other understandings of religious experience; we have already seen, for example, his favourable mention of Tillich’s “being grasped by ultimate

\textsuperscript{140} Vertin, “Lonergan’s Metaphysics of Value and Love,” 210, n. 45. Vertin also credits Patrick Byrne and Charles Hefting with suggesting this idea.

\textsuperscript{141} In an interview with the author of this work, Michael Vertin elaborates that the word “love” should not be introduced too soon in contexts of interreligious dialogue, since it is “such a basic and important rich label, [about which] people already have got tons of ideas, categories, and concepts,” such that “it might be challenging to the point of impossibility for them to hear what you’re saying about a reality, because as soon as you call it ‘love,’ they put in their categories, so for them to genuinely hear you, they have to get out of their categories; but, because they are so rich and longstanding … it’s really difficult … leaving aside for the moment all the baggage, Western baggage, Christian baggage, Trinitarian baggage, that Western Christian readers will bring to this discussion, and you want to appeal to everybody including people who don’t have that baggage” (Vertin, Interview with Benjamin Luján. Toronto: 28 February 2014).

\textsuperscript{142} Petillo, “The Universalist Philosophy of Religious Experience,” 956.
concern” and Otto’s “mysterium fascinans et tremendum.” He elaborates in more depth on the way that the experience of grace is

as large as the Christian experience of life. It is experience of man’s capacity for self-transcendence, of his unrestricted openness to the intelligible, the true, the good. It is experience of a twofold frustration of that capacity: the objective frustration of life in a world distorted by sin; the subjective frustration of one’s incapacity to break with one’s own evil ways.

What is interesting about this passage is that it presents what might seem at first to be merely “nature” (the unrestricted human yearning) as possibly already a manifestation of grace. In addition, of course, it stays away from the language of love. Thus it suggests that following the transcendental imperatives – wanting to improve oneself – can already provide instances of religious experience.

Lonergan also explicitly links his own account of religious experience with Karl Rahner’s supernatural existential, saying that what he (Lonergan) describes philosophically as “being in love in an unrestricted manner … in a theological context could be paralleled with Karl Rahner’s supernatural existential.” Vertin likewise makes this comparison. Thus it is informative to consider Rahner’s characterization of religious experience, or grace. And indeed, Rahner has so

compellingly characterized the experience of “the spirit in its proper transcendence” that his reflections are worth quoting here at some length:

Have we ever kept quiet, even though we wanted to defend ourselves when we had been unfairly treated? Have we ever forgiven someone even though we got no thanks for it and our silent forgiveness was taken for granted? … Have we ever been absolutely lonely? … Have we ever been good to someone who did not show the slightest sign of gratitude or comprehension and when we also were not rewarded by the feeling of having been 'selfless,' decent, etc.? If we find such experiences, then we have experienced the spirit in the way meant here [and] once we experience the spirit in this way, we (at least, we as Christians who live in faith) have also already *in fact* experienced the *supernatural*.147

Although Rahner does also mention examples involving love, the examples listed here make it clear that he sees religious experience as not *fundamentally* or *necessarily* a matter of love. It is all of this variety, in short, which is forgotten about or brushed aside if we focus overly narrowly on love. Thus, even if we see all of this variety of experience as a manifestation of God’s love for us, or of our love for and seeking of God, this does not entail that the term “love” ought to be the fundamental guide for our investigation of what religious experience itself is at a phenomenological level – or indeed, even at a psychological or Christian theological level, as this variety of specifically Christian examples makes clear.

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Chapter 4
Conclusions and Implications

4.1. Conclusions

4.1.1. Some Clarifications of the Relation amongst the Phenomenology, Psychology, and Theology of Religious Experience in a Lonergan-based Approach

Using as a starting point an examination of the recent contributions of Jeremy Blackwood and Robert Doran on a potential fifth level of human consciousness (the level of love), I have suggested some important methodological clarifications to the theme of religious experience in an approach shaped by Lonergan’s analysis. I have argued that Lonergan’s account of religious experience, and the accounts of some of his interpreters, includes a combination of methodological approaches (specifically, phenomenological, psychological, and Christian theological approaches) without these different methodologies being fully or clearly distinguished. The result is a variety of characterizations of religious experience, which often are intertwined with one another. An examination of a concrete example provided by the present author and an exploration of some views taken from the works of Frederick Crowe and Michael Vertin have been helpful in differentiating amongst these three approaches and highlighting the connections amongst them, where the phenomenological perspective is revealed as a basis for both of the others, and the psychological perspective additionally as a basis for the theological.

4.1.1.1. Phenomenology

I have pointed out that Crowe’s views on the structural dimension of human consciousness can help us identify some important hermeneutical tools for investigating religious experience. Lonergan himself, as we have seen, conceives his views on religious experience in relation to the human capacity for self-transcendence. As a strict description of what happens in religious
experience, we can say that it is the gratuitous experience of the full actualization of that capacity. In other words, religious experience, described as mere data of awareness (upon which we can then ask questions for understanding), refers to the gratuitous experience of the complete fulfillment of the transcendental intentions. In contrast, I have suggested that the phenomenological meaning or interpretation of religious experience refers to the gratuitous experience of the beginnings of the complete fulfillment of the transcendental intentions. These suggestions are not entirely original, since they are also found in the works of Crowe and Vertin, though with different levels of explicitation.

4.1.1.2. Psychology

Similarly, I have suggested some clarifications with regards to the meaning of the psychological approach to religious experience. With the help of Crowe’s views on what he calls the “historical” dimension of human consciousness, I have pointed out that Lonergan’s interpretation of religious experience as an experience of “unrestricted being in love” is one psychological characterization of religious experience – among many possible others. I have also suggested that this particular formulation could certainly be based on a psychological manifestation of that experience in terms of love – again, among many other possible psychological manifestations, expressed in other terms.

Even though interpreting religious experience as an experience of unrestricted being love can have advantages over other psychological formulations, this formulation also possesses significant disadvantages, since it is greatly influenced by Western and Christian understandings regarding the meaning of the word “love,” which might complicate the elucidation of religious experience in non-Christians, and particularly in non-Western persons. In addition, I have argued that describing the effect of religious experience on the structures of human consciousness in
terms of “love” is problematic. A helpful way to notice this is by realizing that there are concrete instances of so-called human love that might already include the unrestricted component that characterizes the effect of religious experience in human consciousness. Thus, the supernatural unrestrictedness that characterizes religious experience might in fact be driving the “natural” unrestrictedness of human nature – namely, the human yearning for all that is intelligent, true, and good. This has important repercussions at a Christian theological level.

4.1.1.3. Theology

I have pointed out that labeling this experience as “religious” is already a formulation from a Christian theological perspective. More specifically, interpreting this experience as an experience of “divine/religious love” (i.e. God’s love) presupposes the psychological formulation of that experience as “unrestricted love,” and perhaps also certain psychological manifestations of that experience in human consciousness related to a loving, supreme, personal God, as well as perhaps related to the figure of Christ. Characterizing this experience as an experience of God’s love is undoubtedly a helpful Christian theological interpretation for many Christians. Nevertheless, it does not encompass the variety of psychological manifestations that this experience can have, even in Christians. For example, speaking instead of an experience of the Holy Spirit might perhaps better accommodate the variety of possible manifestations that this experience can have in Christians.148 Moreover, as mentioned above, speaking of an experience of God’s love might imply a contrast with experiences of simply human love, where these experiences might be quickly assumed to have nothing to do with God. Perhaps it is important to

find new labels for what this experience is about so that we better emphasize the mediation of human agency as a common vehicle of God’s grace to human beings.

4.1.2. Some Clarifications of the Relationship between Human and Divine Love

The contrast between human and divine love in Lonergan’s account, I have suggested, is first and foremost a theoretical distinction regarding two different ways of understanding the dynamism of human affectivity. Although there might be instances of religious experience that are not connected to cases of human love, and, similarly, there might be instances of human love that do not include the distinctive effect of religious experience in human consciousness, this does not mean that religious experience is always separate from concrete experiences of “human” love. In fact, I have argued, that often it might not be separate at all, since our love for another person can in fact entail “that easy freedom of those who do all good because they are in love,” which is characteristic of religious experience. In this respect, Vertin compellingly proposes a “reversal of Doran’s … suggestion that ‘we must turn to human love to find the analogy by which we are able to reach some further understanding … of the reality of grace.’” He argues instead that “we gain a fuller understanding of human love by referring to our experience of divine love, not vice versa,” even though experiencing divine love and recognizing that we have experienced it might be two quite different things.

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151 Ibid.
We should keep in mind that Lonergan’s own account of religious experience does not intend to be a treatment of human love in any substantial way. For example, John Dadosky reminds us that,

The principal thing to keep in mind is that Lonergan did not reflect sufficiently on the idea of love in his later thought so as to distinguish explicitly the so-called natural loving, that is, love that is proportionate to human living (romantic, family, neighbour, society) and the love which is not-proportionate (transcendence). Lonergan would not only agree with this distinction, he probably presumed it …

Moreover, Crowe has pointed out how Lonergan in Method seems to leave the question of human love unsettled: while “p. 122 makes it an exception, along with God’s gift of love, to the ordinary process” of knowledge preceding love, “pp. 278 and 283 do not make it an exception.” Much is sometimes made of Lonergan’s division of love into intimate, civil, and religious categories. However, it is interesting that, in an interview, where Lonergan draws the distinction between “love of intimacy, love of humanity, and the love of God,” he says that they are “three kinds, three ways, of being in love” where “God’s gift is our orientation to the universe.” This suggests a more fluid understanding of love than the three-category division that, as we have seen, Doran and Blackwood tend to emphasize.


\[154\] 77160V0E070 / T2

\[155\] See Chapter 2.
Paraphrasing Lonergan, it seems that the occasions of religious experience might be as varied as human life (understood as *concrete human living*). This is because the realm of “nature,” – for example, as it is found in the so-called realm of “human” love – might already be a vehicle of God’s grace in the concrete life of human beings. Thus, we can meaningfully and truly say that “human” love can and does involve self-sacrifice, even for one’s “enemies,” for example, since *concrete* human love might, already, include divine love. Hence, it seems appropriate to stress an approach to investigating religious experience from a theological perspective that looks for cases of religious experience in instances that might seem merely “human.”

Lonergan, for example, describes the love of a man and a woman as resulting in “privations endured together, [and] evils banished by common good will.”\(^\text{156}\) Similarly, in the following passage, Lonergan speaks of loving, in the realm of “natural/human” responsibility, with a language that suggests that in fact this type of loving could include an unrestricted (i.e. religious) component: “When questions for deliberation lead to an evaluation, you are becoming a principle of benevolence and beneficence, capable of truly loving, capable of truly collaborating. You are in a world that is not only mediated by meaning but also motivated by value.”\(^\text{157}\) Furthermore, Crowe reflects about what experiences, as children, would give the word “God” its religious meaning; he says that examples might be times when we come up “against


\(^{157}\) Lonergan, “What are Judgments of Value?” 143.
sheer mystery,” as when, as boys, he says, “we watch them bury our grandmother.”

Interpreting Crowe, we might say that, as children, experiencing for first time the death of someone dear to us might entail a religious experience.

Moreover, Lonergan mentions a possible instance of operative grace – that is, a case of religious experience – in the life of the apostle Peter, and points out how religious experience might sometimes occur but pass unnoticed:

**Question:** How do you distinguish different kinds of love, especially otherworldly love from this-worldly love?

**Response:** There is loving God with your whole heart, your whole soul, with all your mind and all your strength. That is from the Old and New Testament. It is a love without conditions or qualifications or reserve. Insofar as it is without any qualification or condition or reserve, it is something absolute in its character, totally and in every respect. To love any creature in that fashion would be idolatry. It is God’s gift to us, St Paul, Romans 5.5: “The love of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.” Now in that love it is common to distinguish two phases: operative and cooperative. Operative is represented by what you say: St Peter saying at the Last Supper, “Lord, if everyone should deny you, at least I won’t deny you”; and cooperative, when St Peter underwent martyrdom. He not only professed it but he did it.

**Question:** What do you mean by otherworldly love?

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Response: When I say it is otherworldly I mean its object is not some creature, something of this world. I don’t say it doesn’t occur in this life; I say it does occur in this life. I say it is in anyone in the state of sanctifying grace, though I don’t say that anyone in the state of sanctifying grace is skillful enough at psychological introspection to detect it.159

This reminds me of the realization I had with James: “If he had needed to be adopted, I would have adopted him!” Could it be that in and through Peter’s love for Jesus, in particular in the context of their circumstances, Peter might have received the gift of God’s love in and through his love for Jesus? Lonergan certainly seems to think so. Finally, in agreement with Lonergan’s point that religious experience and the acting motivated by it might not be recognized by the person in question, Vertin also mentions how “experiencing divine love and recognizing it as such are not the same” and thus that “what we call ‘human’ love may often involve not a little of divine love.”160 Hence, I find compelling reasons in my own experience and in the testimony of others – including the direct and indirect testimony of some Lonergan scholars – to affirm that religious experience might at times be already implicitly present – that is, perhaps without being recognized as such – in concrete instances of “human” love, since religious loving might indeed be implicitly present in “human” loving.

In religious experience it is not the case that we first decide to love one person and then we move to love others; rather, the experience of loving a particular person is an instantiation of our antecedent yearning for all that is true and good. We experience that antecedent yearning as a gift, as in the examples above. Paraphrasing some words from Vertin: The gift constitutes the

159 Lonergan, “Horizons,” 27.
basic horizon within which we pursue our achievements – achievements that, insofar as they are authentic, simply “play out” the gifted orientation that, even before we have made a single choice of our own, already constitutes us fundamentally as what we are.

Hence, though theoretically we can separate divine love from human love, in concrete human living they can belong to one same type of experience. Divine love might presuppose human love, and human love can already imply or include divine love. For this reason, I agree with Blackwood that the example of the young Scottish woman\(^{161}\) shows complete self-transcendence occurring in human love; however, I do not agree that this is evidence of two different complete self-transcendences, one corresponding to human and one to divine love. Rather, I believe it supports the view I have been defending, namely that instances of human love, when they involve true self-transcendence, are already (even if only implicitly) instances of divine love. Thus, though it is meaningful to talk about loving God in our consciousness, it is perhaps more meaningful – in the sense that it is more fundamental – to talk about loving God in terms of our making decisions and performing actions that are universally directed. The presence of love in our consciousness naturally disposes us to love all others; not expressing this gratuitous unrestricted orientation is not to embrace God in our consciousness.

### 4.2. Some Possible Implications of This Study for Future Work

#### 4.2.1. Supporting Michaels Vertin’s Views on the Phenomenological Features of Religious Experience and Its Metaphysical Implications

According to Vertin, religious experience *enriches* the four types of conscious-intentional operations and their four transcendental precepts in such a way that the person who undergoes

\(^{161}\) See Appendix.
religious experience accepts it by letting her conscious-intentional operations become motivated, guided, and normed by religious experience.\textsuperscript{162} Thus, for the religious person, using the language of love to interpret religious experience, the four transcendental precepts are loving attention, loving intelligence, loving reasonableness, and loving responsibility. In turn, on Vertin’s interpretation, the transcendental intentions of the religious person are loveable intelligibility, loveable reality, and loveable value.\textsuperscript{163}

In light of the fact that human love might already include divine love, we can say that human authenticity might, in fact, already constitute religious living. That is, in and through concrete acts of attention, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility, human beings might already be \textit{acting religiously}, since those concrete acts might be motivated, normed, and guided by religious experience, without the person knowing it. Thus, religious living in terms of concrete actions might refer to nothing else than acting responsibly, reasonably, intelligently, and attentively. In other words, if it is true that divine love can already be implicitly present in our concrete experiences of human love, then there is no need to look for anything \textit{additional} to the “natural” workings of human authenticity. Those “natural” workings (the transcendental intentions, the transcendental imperatives, and the four types of conscious-intentional operations) can already, in fact, be embodying and manifesting the supernatural. When they do, these workings are \textit{loving/holy} natural workings – this is to say, they are the three loving/holy transcendental intentions, the four loving/holy transcendental imperatives, and the four loving/holy interrelated types of conscious-intentional operations.


Hence, the way we manifest the effect of religious experience in our whole intentional consciousness is by letting ourselves be motivated, guided, and normed by religious experience in the operations that correspond to each level of consciousness. It is important to note that such a person 1) does not perform additional operations besides the four types of conscious-intentional operations, and 2) does not follow additional precepts besides the four transcendental precepts. In concrete human living, her operations – insofar as they refer only to concrete actions – are precisely the same; namely, she experiences, understands, judges, and decides, \textit{and nothing else}, but she does that now motivated, guided, and normed by religious experience – whether she notices it or not. Thus, rather than talking about a fifth level of consciousness (which should imply that there is something additional happening besides what is already included in the first four levels), it makes more sense to simply speak of \textit{four} levels and the \textit{enrichment} of them by religious experience.

4.2.2. Supporting Robert Doran’s Suggestion on complementing Lonergan’s Theology with the insights of Liberation Theology

Robert Doran states that the proper development of Lonergan’s theology requires a work of integration with the insights of liberation theology, particularly with regards to the thought of Gustavo Gutiérrez.\footnote{Robert M. Doran, “Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations,” \textit{Theological Studies} 58.1 (1997), 83-84; “Essays in Systematic Theology 50: The Renewal of Theology” (Convocation Address, University of Saint Michael’s College, Toronto, November 2 2013), 2-3.} Blackwood, similarly – although he does not explicitly reference liberation theology – urges that “[o]ur conception of grace cannot be individual; it primarily must be social.”\footnote{Blackwood, “Eighteen Days in 1968,” 26.} The ideas presented in the current work regarding the relationship between human and divine love raises questions about how we are to consider the role of human mediation in relation...
to God’s gift of life (creation) and God’s gift of Itself to human beings (grace). For instance, can we perhaps say that humans not only cannot love God if they do not perform responsible actions, but also that God offers God’s grace to human beings primarily through the mediation of our own hands, minds, and hearts? Gutiérrez raises similar questions to these, and his “preferential option for the poor” rests precisely on his view of a unity of divine love and human love, as well as the unity of salvation history and human history. This is apparent, for example, when Gutiérrez says that charity, understood as our love for God,

exists only in concrete actions (feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, etc.) …

But charity does not exist alongside or above human loves; it is not “the most sublime” human achievement like a grace superimposed upon human love. Charity is [also] God’s love in us and does not exist outside our human capabilities to love and to build a just and friendly world … Charity, the love of God for human beings is found incarnated in human love – of parents, spouses, children, friends – and it leads to its fullness … It is not enough to say that love of God is inseparable from the love of one’s neighbor. It must be added that love for God is unavoidably expressed through love of one’s neighbor.166

However, this unity between human and divine love does not, in Gutiérrez’s conception, imply “any reductionism or dualism,”167 and this makes it harmonize well with my contention that though there might already be divine love in the experience of human love, we can nevertheless


167 Gaspar Martinez, Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation and Public Theologies (New York: Continuum, 2001), 140.
understand them distinctly. This parallel suggests that the views proposed in this work regarding the nature of religious experience will be helpful for the integration that Doran calls for.
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Appendix

Archival Material from the 1975 Lonergan Workshop, as reported by Robert Doran, and from the 1977 and 1980 Lonergan Workshops, as reported by Jeremy Blackwood and Robert Doran

Archival Material from the 1975 Lonergan Workshop, as reported by Robert Doran: Friday, 20 June, 1975

Question: Recently you have spoken of a fifth level of human intentional consciousness, whereby a plurality of self-transcending individuals achieve a higher integration in a community of love. Please expand on this.

Answer: There is very little to expand on this. Everyone knows what it means. Getting there is another thing. But the constitution of the subject is a matter of self-transcendence. You are unconscious when you are in a coma or a deep sleep, a dreamless sleep. When you start to dream, consciousness emerges, but it is fragmentary; it is symbolic. You wake up, and you are in the real world. But if you are merely gaping and understanding nothing, you are not very far in. And so you have another level of asking questions and coming to understand. There is the understanding that people can have from myth and magic and so on, but arriving at the truth is a further step of being reasonable, liberating oneself from astrology, alchemy, legend, and so on and so forth. And responsible. And this is all a matter of immanent development of the subject. But even before you’re born you are not all by yourself, and all during your life. Robinson Crusoe is a real abstraction. And if he really is all alone, his history does not go beyond himself. There is living with others and
being with others. The whole development of humanity is in terms of common meaning. Not just my meaning, attention to my experience, development of my understanding, and so on. Common meaning is the fruit of a common field of experience, and if you are not in that common field of experience you get out of touch. There’s common understanding, and if you have not got that common understanding, well, you are a stranger, or worse a foreigner, you have a different style of common sense, and so on. Common judgments: if what one man thinks is true another man thinks is false, well, they are not going to be able to do very much about anything, insofar as those judgments are relevant to what they do. Common values, common projects, and you can have a common enterprise, and if you don’t [have common values], you will be working at cross-purposes. The highest form of this is love as opposed to hate. It is a hard saying, “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, love them that persecute you,” and so on. There are all kinds of things in the New Testament expanding on this. (85200DTE070; reported in Doran, *Trinity*, 368-69, n. 29)
Archival Material from the 1977 Lonergan Workshop, as reported by
Jeremy Blackwood and Robert Doran: Monday, 20 June, 1977

Question: Would your post-Insight reflection on the objective referent of fourth-level religious experience be the same as the theistic argument of Chapter 19 of Insight? If not, what form would it take?

Answer: … it has an objective reference because love is to another, of another, so there’s an objective reference to the experience once it is identified as love….

Again, “the objective referent of fourth-level religious experience” – I conceive it more and more explicitly since about 1972 as a fifth level. This gift of God’s love … is as much a sublation of all that goes before as any of the others are sublations of what went before them …

Now, the experience of falling in love, how is it – it’s a different experience, as being in love with God is something different from any of these other things because we haven’t had being in love on those levels – we have it on a separate level How does one tie together the objective referent of being in love with the teleology of questioning on the level of intellect or the level of reason – rationality – on the level of deliberation? I think the connecting link we find by going to the unconscious.

There are, in consciousness, horizontal finalities. The finality of attention: we wake up, see the world about us … learn to live in it. On the level of inquiry, we head for all that is intelligible. On the level of reflection, to all truth and reality. On the level of deliberation, to all that is good.
Now, the unconscious is related to all of these finalities with a vertical finality. How do the insights happen? They happen because the appropriate image comes into consciousness. And whether you call it the censor or whatever you please, what releases that image? Well, it’s released from the unconscious – it was a potential image that has become an actual image, and it’s just the image that gives you the insight that you were looking for. Again, it leads to truth. Why? By recalling memories that confirm or oppose the judgment you’re thinking of making. Or again, by envisaging possibilities, imagining possibilities, that would run counter to the judgment, or on the other hand, favour it. To the process of deliberation, by memories and images that remind us of our uneasy conscience, or warn us of the perils of our proposed course of action ....

And finally, it’s related to being in love, for being in love is the consummation of unconscious desire .... God’s gift of his love is the *agape* that sublates *eros*, the loving that sublates desiring ...

[M]orality is on the fourth level, and one becomes moral when one’s deliberations are, not what’s in it for me, or what’s in it for us, but what’s worthwhile. I put that on the fourth level because it sublates the previous levels. And it seems that falling in love, being in love, sublates previous levels too, all four of them. The distinction of levels is between operations that are sublating and operations that are sublated. (91600DTE070; reported in Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 152-53, and “Love and Lonergan’s Cognitional-Intentional Anthropology,” 146-47).
Question: There seems to be a case for recognizing the fourth level of consciousness as, in fact, two levels, corresponding to the “what-to-do?” and “is-it-to-be-done?” questions. Could you please explain why you do not, in fact, separate such levels as a fourth and a fifth?

Answer: Well, I suppose for the past ten years, I’ve been tending to call it a distinction, but I haven’t written about it yet … as far as I know. I may have alluded to it. But, I do think that experience; understanding; judgments of fact, probability, and possibility are three levels. Moral judgments are a fourth. And the complete self-transcendence of falling in love on the domestic level, the civil level, and the religious level are a fifth level. It’s the achievement of self-transcendence…. You no longer count, or are thinking only of yourself. And my illustration of people who begin to forget about themselves is when I was doing ministry at Dalkeith …. And at one house that I was to go to, the lady of the house, her daughter wasn’t there, but I was to see her daughter and explain to her daughter that she was out of that house and would never see her mother again if she married the Protestant she was intending to marry. And I was to put this point across clearly. So I saw the daughter, and said what I could, and everything I would say to her she would reply, “Well, I’ll ask him.” She only thought of what he’d do. It was the only answer she could give. It was complete self-transcendence. They were already two in one flesh – at least potentially – and she wasn’t thinking of herself at all, she was thinking of – of him. . . . Anyway, it’s an example of what is meant by self-transcendence; it’s self-forgetting. (97700DTE080; reported in Blackwood, “Sanctifying Grace,” 154-55, and “Love and Lonergan’s Cognitional-Intentional Anthropology,” 154-55).