

HISTORICITY AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Thomas J. McPartland

Kentucky State University

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In the late twentieth century there was considerable debate among philosophers of religion over the issue of the universality of religious experience. The debate, of course, may not have taken place in other eras, when it was not deemed important enough to treat religion in terms of experience. The influence of Schleiermacher, romanticism, and phenomenology was evident. Voegelin, too, participated in the conversation. There were two extreme, but dominate, “schools” in the debate.¹ On the one hand, perennialists insisted that there was a common core to religious experience that was prior to any interpretations and that the danger lurked that interpretations might distort, if not contaminate, the experiences. Voegelin thus warned about the dangers of “dogmatism”—cutting off the expressions from the engendering experiences.² On the other hand, the constructionists, frequently appealing to the later Wittgenstein’s language theory or to the phenomenology of the horizon, objected to the claim that there was any pure experience outside the framework of interpretations. So Voegelin could spend volumes detailing the concrete historical expressions of religious meaning, ranging from compactness to differentiation. Both the perennialists and the constructionists, however, shared a common premise—namely, that religious experience would be some kind of perception (or “intuitive knowledge”). With this premise determining the ground rules for the debate each side could

¹ In his nuanced treatment of religious experience, Louis Roy locates the decisive issues in this debate. Louis Roy, *Transcendent Experiences: Phenomenology and Critique* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 166-75. As an alternative, he seeks a third way, influenced much by Lonergan (172).

² Eric Voegelin, *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), chaps. 3, 5.

point to the inevitable weaknesses of the other. The constructionists could ask for instances of this “pure experience” and always find the experiences embedded in interpretations. There was, then, no evidence of this religious perception. The perennialists could counter that the constructivist position would reduce religion to mere interpretations, leading inexorably to historical relativism. Moreover, the only way for constructionists to avoid historicism would be to deduce religious experience as some Kantian “thing-in-itself”. But—to cite the Kantian problematic—how would it be meaningful to talk of that which was beyond the range of interpretations?

In his essay on “Experience and its Symbolization in History,” Voegelin introduces—perhaps surprisingly to the reader—the notion of the “depth,” which is, in a sense, “unconscious” or “beyond” consciousness. Why does he introduce the notion of this “depth” if he is appealing to engendering experience? What Voegelin is trying to do here, at least in part, is to avoid treating experience as a perception. He will not therefore play the game according to the rules of the perennialist-constructionist debate.

This paper seeks to illuminate Voegelin’s contention that behind the diversity and multiplicity of religious symbols (and symbols of order) is an equivalence of “experience” that is not perception. If one could affirm the equivalence of experience in the way Voegelin proposes, one could embrace historicity without succumbing to historicism. Obvious questions arise: What is meant by experience? What are its prominent features and structures? What is religious experience? How can it be a constant compatible with, and perhaps demanding, historicity? The illumination, so we contend, will come from Bernard Lonergan’s philosophy of consciousness and what we consider his absolutely crucial distinction between consciousness and knowledge, a distinction largely overlooked in the literature on the subject matter—with its attendant

confusions. Lonergan breaks completely with the idea of consciousness as perception and articulates as an alternative a comprehensive philosophy of consciousness. Indeed, to use Voegelin's term, Lonergan's philosophy will provide an example of equivalence in relation to that of Voegelin.³

But let us introduce the topic by a concrete event.

1. A Dramatic Encounter

In the spring of 1976 at the University of Washington Eric Voegelin presented a series of lectures and discussions on the topic of "Dogmatism and Religious Experience." During one such session in the upper floor of the Victorian building housing the Classics Department, Voegelin was expounding upon the crucial notion of a "theophanic event" to the utter astonishment of a world-renowned Weberian scholar in the audience. After all, as the professor remarked, how could Voegelin talk of such things in an age that Weber described as one of "disenchantment." What could Voegelin possibly mean? Voegelin's response to the professor must have seemed even more bizarre. Voegelin asked whether the professor was indeed serious about his question and really wanted to know what Voegelin meant. Or was he an "intellectual crook"? The professor, of course, vehemently denied the latter possibility and affirmed that he truly wanted to know. "Well," responded Voegelin, "*that* is a theophanic event!"⁴

Behind the question of the professor were assumptions representative of a "climate of opinion" both clinging to the progressivist view of history, wherein science has replaced myth and metaphysics, but also possibly disturbed, if not shocked, at the depiction of human history by objective scientific analysis as a multiplicity of apparently irreconcilable worldviews. This led

³ For broader treatment of the equivalence, see Thomas J. McPartland, *Lonergan and the Philosophy of Historical Existence* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), chaps. 9-11.

⁴ The author was present at the discussion.

Weber himself to fear that the future might be “a polar night of icy darkness and hardness.”⁵

Notwithstanding the ultimate contradiction between progressivism and historicism, what is most noteworthy in this context is how dogmatically the professor adhered to these convictions. It was simply beyond his horizon that a respectable professor such as Voegelin (who, after all, had been invited by the university to deliver the lectures) could speak of religious experience in a positive tone, as of contemporary relevance--as integral with the very pursuit of truth itself. Voegelin violated contemporary intellectual dogmas by not reducing religious experience to pathology or to a manifestation of *Urdumheit* (primitive stupidity). At the same time, Voegelin refused to counter the professor's dogmas by recourse to religious dogmas, perhaps the expected response.

Voegelin's appeal to religious experience implied there was something normative about it. Amid the historical diversity and variety of religious dogmas, expressions, and interpretations was the constant—the experience. This further implied there is a human nature at least related to the constant in some fashion.

These claims are of paramount importance in contemporary politics. At least in the Western liberal democracies the state has, for the most part, relegated religion to the private sphere. And certain secularist political ideologies would even seek to diminish or to eliminate its influence in the political culture. These forces of secularism would identify religion and its “experiences” with fanaticism. And who could deny evidence of such religious fanaticism? We could, of course, point to the atrocities of the Crusades or the Wars of the Reformation. But we have more immediate contemporary examples in the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the rise of so-called “fundamentalism” in the Muslim world, both Shiite and Sunni. The decisive issue is

⁵ Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed., H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, pt. 1. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 128..

whether religious experience is a constant in history. If it is, and, as the secularists argue, if it is pernicious, then there must be a perpetual battle against it. If, on the other hand, as Voegelin alleges, it is intrinsically linked to the normative dimension of human nature and thus the source of order in human society and human history, then to repress it, even if by cultural warfare, would be to repress human nature. If indeed the yearnings associated with religious experience are constant, then to repress them, or to deny them, or even to ignore them in a fit of cultural control could block their genuine expression and deflect them into *divertissements*, as classically identified by Pascal and Kierkegaard, or, worse yet, facilitate their migration into diabolic political activities. The energies of religious experience, dealing, as they are, with matters of ultimate concern, are so potent that negotiating the religious dimension of existence may require the utmost care and the most delicate and nuanced understanding of religious experience. Such has been the advice of spiritual directors throughout the ages in all the religious traditions.

What, then, is religious experience? Clearly, this is an extremely complicated and philosophically controversial topic, and we can only deal with in a summary fashion in this paper. What we can do at this stage is to eliminate for serious consideration the notion that the experience is like that of sensation, ordinarily the meaning of experience for an empiricist. Unless we try to explain religious experience as a projection of human fears and wants onto the contents of sensations, as was the case for Lucretius and Hume (or in the more sophisticated version of Freud), we cannot maintain the integrity and *sui generis* character of religious experience by reducing it to sensations. This position is hardly new. It has been fought for the last century against positivism by scholars in the fields of the phenomenology of religion, the

comparative study of religion, and the history of religion, as Voegelin readily acknowledges.⁶

But, more shockingly, as we shall argue, we cannot even use the analogy of sensation. This is indeed a radical position. Thus we should not anticipate “spiritual sensations”—some spiritual look at spiritual contents “out there.” To be sure, we need not rule out of court the possibility of content-bearing spiritual revelations in the forms of words, images, meanings, and judgments as parts of a prophetic tradition. Nor can we deny the frequent use of the metaphor of “vision” in the writings of mystics. Still, in both instances, that of the tradition and that of the individual mystics, our argument will be that we are dealing with interpretations of religious experience not religious experience itself.

As we proceed to investigate religious experience, we shall follow Voegelin’s insistence—in his own version of empiricism (and that of Lonergan)—that we focus on the concrete consciousness of a concrete person and thus neither on deduced a priori structures nor on any purely theoretical construct. But this brings into focus the dimension of history. Voegelin insists that the flow of consciousness itself has an internal time structure.⁷ The concreteness of the consciousness and of the person, participating in the “process of reality,” is embedded in the concreteness of the historical situation and its challenges. Voegelin at the beginning of his *Order and History* describes this as the “drama of history.”⁸ Voegelin is aware that his more explicit and thematic treatment of the historical dimension of human existence is to expand the empirical range of analysis beyond that of the classical Greek philosophers, Plato and

⁶ Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, trans. Gerhart Niemeyer (Notre Dame: Notre University Press, 1978), pp. 7-9. In personal conversations, Voegelin often put it this way: “After all there is science.” He meant *Wissenschaft*, a broad concept of “science” that does not arbitrarily reduce human reality to fit the model of the natural sciences.

⁷ Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis: On the Theory of History and Politics*, vol. 6 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. David Walsh and trans. M. J. Hanak based on trans. by Gerhart Niemeyer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), p. 68.

⁸ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vError! Main Document Only.ol. 1, *Israel and Revelation*, vol. 14 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. M. P. Hogan (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), p. 39.

Aristotle.⁹ This means that Voegelin embraces the historicity of human existence. This does not, however, lead to historicism, to the view that would reduce all of human thought and action solely to the relativity of historical circumstance. For Voegelin, there are lines of meaning in history that do not run along lines of time.¹⁰ The constant of religious experience is not an abstraction. Adopting the language of phenomenology, we can say that there is a transcultural basic horizon that does not exist by itself as a freely floating field of consciousness but is always present, in varying degrees, in relative horizons. We need to explore the dynamics of this interaction of basic horizon and relative horizons and how religious experience is constitutive of basic horizon.

We need, then, first to establish precisely what consciousness is. Indeed this determination will be decisive for our whole effort. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Lonergan's contribution is seminal. Applying Lonergan's analysis of consciousness as self-presence to religious consciousness, divorcing it entirely from any analogy of seeing, we shall detail how it illuminates and substantiates Voegelin's treatment of experiences and their symbolization. This, in turn, will allow us to account for the dynamics of both identity and diversity in religious history and history in general.

2. Consciousness

Lonergan's notion of consciousness builds upon the efforts of Brentano and Husserl and, perhaps surprisingly, is consonant with some striking breakthroughs of Sartre. In the nineteenth century the science of psychology in Great Britain and Germany under the positivist influence of empiricism and materialism attempted to reduce consciousness to physiology (as a precursor to

⁹ Eric Voegelin, *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 268.

¹⁰ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History* v**Error! Main Document Only.**ol. 4, *The Ecumenic Age*. vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Michael Franz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), pp. 2-6.

cotemporary attempts to reduce the mind to neural science). Franz Brentano had a broader horizon at his disposal with his familiarity with Aristotle and Aquinas and was able to draw an important distinction between mental phenomena and physical phenomena. He used the scholastic terms “object” and “intention” to specify that mental acts are oriented to contents (“primary objects”). This orientation to primary objects is the intentionality of consciousness. But there can be no objects without mental acts. The two are concomitant. Thus, for example, there can be no object heard without the act of hearing. Brentano calls the mental act, variously, the “secondary object,” “consciousness of this consciousness,” or “inner presentation.”¹¹ As is the case with pioneers, Brentano’s language can be strained. Mental acts often seem to be a strange kind of intentional object. And Brentano is not clear on the process of objectifying or reflecting on mental acts. It has been the burden of subsequent thinkers to try to clarify intentional objects and mental acts.

Husserl sought to take what he characterized as Brentano’s descriptive and classificatory approach and develop it into an explanatory and rigorous science of the data of consciousness. The result was phenomenology. Husserl’s vast enterprise, which surely made him an original philosopher whose influence has been enormous, was concentrated on intentionality. And it is in this area that he has come under severe criticism. We may say that much of Postmodernism has taken off from this criticism. Derrida took issue with Husserl’s idea of language as the object of intentional consciousness such that propositions are constituted by the noetic acts of a pure transcendental ego in an essentially monological activity of a self-contained subject. On the contrary, Derrida employed semiotic theory to argue that signs do the constituting in their interacting and difference. Derrida saw Husserl’s phenomenology as the last vestiges of the

¹¹ Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, ed. Linda L. McAlister (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), pp. 126-29.

metaphysics of presence that Heidegger had attacked.¹² Derrida's Post-Modern deconstruction eliminated any need for the subject altogether. Voegelin would join in the attack on Husserl's construct of a transcendental ego (which is not the concrete consciousness of a concrete person).¹³ And Lonergan would agree with Voegelin that Husserl has conceived intentionality under the form of sense perception. "In brief," says Lonergan "phenomenology is a highly purified empiricism." Lonergan claims that Husserl's phenomenology is—mistakenly—under the sway of the confrontational, and representational, model, rooted in our experience, as animals, of an extroverted "already-out-there-now-real" world: "The vitality of animal extroversion is attenuated from sensible perception to intuition of universals, and from intuition of universals to the more impalpable inspection of formal essences."¹⁴ It was precisely this problem of the analogy of perception that gave Brentano his difficulties in such terms as consciousness as inner presentation. Husserl's focus on intentionality did not really shed much light on the nature of noetic acts. It was left to Sartre to investigate this area.

Sartre agrees with Husserl that consciousness is always consciousness of an object. Consciousness "posits" the object. The object is transcendent of the consciousness. This is "consciousness of the second degree." But accompanying the consciousness of an object is

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973); for criticism, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990), chap. 7.

¹³ Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, chaps. 2-3. "The 'I' seems to me to be no given at all but rather a highly complex symbol for certain determinants of direction within consciousness" (67). See also Eric Voegelin, *On the Form of the American Mind*, trans. Ruth Hein, vol. 1 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Jurgen Gebhardt and Barry Cooper (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), pp. 77-78.

¹⁴ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3. of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, 5th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 440. See also Michael McCarthy, *The Crisis of Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), chap. 3. Lonergan was aware that late in life, under the influence of Heidegger, Husserl moved from pure phenomenology to a consideration of the Lebenswelt. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, vol. 18 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 177-83, chap. 11.

“unreflected” or “non-positional” consciousness, that is, “consciousness of the first degree.”

This consciousness “is purely and simply consciousness of being consciousness of that object.”¹⁵

Sartre may be staining the language here also because he is entering not only unexplored territory but also because he is leaving the world of objects. For unreflected consciousness is not an object itself. It is non-positional since it is not posited as an object. And if it does not need to be posited as an object to exist, it avoids an infinite regress of objectifying acts, the bane of many theories of consciousness.¹⁶ With utter consistency Sartre insists that any reflection on this consciousness of the first degree is consciousness of the second degree, that is, consciousness of an object. Still, the act of reflection itself is non-positional consciousness: “Insofar as my reflecting consciousness is consciousness of itself, it is non-positional consciousness.”¹⁷ Sartre’s analysis—correctly--goes against common usage of consciousness. The English word “consciousness,” for example, is derived from the Latin *cum* (with) and *scire* (to know). The Latin original meant either knowing something in the company of others or (with *sibi*) self-knowing.¹⁸ In 1620 “consciousness” was used to mean awareness to oneself. But what is this “awareness”? Since the seventeenth century “consciousness” has come generally to mean perception of the mind (Locke, 1694), or the state of being mentally aware of a thing (1746-47), or the sum total of impressions, thoughts, and feelings that make up one’s conscious being (Locke, 1695).¹⁹ The dominant theme, therefore, is consciousness as perception or knowledge of the self. For Sartre, this is precisely consciousness of the second degree and not consciousness of the first degree.

¹⁵ Jean Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*, trans. Forest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: The Noonday Press, 1957), p. 40.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

¹⁸ Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “scio”; *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), s.v. “conscious” and “consciousness.”

¹⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), s.v. “conscious,” 3, 4, and 5.

As Sartre seeks to apply his analysis of consciousness to develop his existential ontology, he succumbs to the lure of the model of perception. In spite his sensitive exploration of various facets of consciousness, including existential states and affective moods, he has a primitive phenomenology of cognition. This is crucial when he describes reflection on consciousness of the first degree. Corresponding to his distinction of consciousness of the first degree and consciousness of the second degree Sartre makes the ontological distinction between the “for itself” (*pour-soi*) and the “in-itself” (*en-soi*). When consciousness of the first degree reflects on itself and makes itself an object, it becomes an in-itself (consciousness in the second degree). This is perhaps being in its proper sense, brute and opaque. To be sure, the for-itself also is; it has facticity. Yet it establishes this unique facticity by negating itself as object or thing: “The for-itself is the in-itself losing itself as in-itself in order to found itself as consciousness.”²⁰ The for-itself must “nihilate” the in-itself to be its own possibility.²¹ Sartre is, of course, following the existentialist differentiation of the self from a thing. But he does so in a way that creates a radical distance between subject and object: the self as objectified must be “nihilated” in order to preserve the integrity of the self as conscious being. Self as object is exterior, or extrinsic, to self as subject. The operative model here is one of confrontation. Even the term “positional” is suggestive of spatial imagery. The self reflects on itself by something like a look, creating the irremediable distance or gulf, and objectifies itself in concepts. Thus is established Sartre’s subjectivist brand of existentialism, where sheer existence (the for-itself) precedes essence (the in-itself). In spite of Sartre’s protests, perhaps present in the background are residual notions of Descartes’ *res extensa* or Kant’s phenomenal objects. But is this really what happens in self-knowledge? What are the actual cognitive operations involved in self-reflection and in the

²⁰ Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 150.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

process of knowing in general, all of which we are conscious in the first degree? The same attention that Brentano and Husserl gave to classifying conscious intentionality needs to be focused on the conscious acts in their complexity and spontaneous relations.

Lonergan fully endorses Sartre's notion of non-positional consciousness.²² Lonergan variously describes it as "self-presence," "self-awareness," or "internal experience."²³ If in my conscious intentionality I am looking at a tree, I am simultaneously present to the tree and present to myself as looking; if I am reading a book, I am simultaneously present to the content of the book and present to myself as reading; if I am deliberating about reading a book, I am simultaneously present to the pros and cons of reading the book and present to myself as deliberating. Lonergan, too, like Sartre, strains the language. By "present" he means nothing like Heidegger's "present-at-hand." There is no spatial connotation to self-presence. Nor need there be such a connotation to that to which the subject is present if it is not an act of perception. Generally, when Lonergan speaks of "consciousness" he means this self-presence (Sartre's consciousness of the first degree). Consciousness, then, is awareness immanent in appetitive, sensitive, cognitional, and volitional operations.²⁴ Lonergan provides an extensive phenomenological classification of the operations that we experience internally:

²² Bernard Lonergan, *Collection*, vol. 4 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. F. E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 172-73, where he refers to a favorable article on Sartre's ideas of consciousness by Georges Van Riet.

²³ For a general discussion of consciousness, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3. of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, 5th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 344-352; *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 6-10; *Collection*, pp. 209-210. See also McPartland, *Lonergan and the Philosophy of Historical Existence*, chap. 1. Louis Roy makes the helpful distinction between "consciousness-in" (self-presence) and "consciousness-of" (presence to objects), in his *Mystical Consciousness: Western Perspectives and Dialogue with Japanese Thinkers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. xv, xviii. "Consciousness-in" is his primary meaning of the term consciousness. For his excellent summary of theories of consciousness, see chap. 1.

²⁴ *Insight*, pp. 344-346, 636-638.

Operations in the pattern are seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, inquiring, understanding, conceiving, formulating, reflecting, marshaling and weighing the evidence, judging; deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, writing.²⁵

Throughout his writings he enriches the classification, especially, as we shall see, by adding affective states and moods. A number of comments on the passage just quoted are in order so we may grasp the strategic importance of Lonergan's brand of phenomenology.

First, we must note the location of understanding in the sequence. By "understanding" Lonergan means the act of gaining an insight, a neglected topic to which he devotes the first three hundred pages of his magnum opus, *Insight*.²⁶ An insight is the "release to the tension of inquiry"; it comes "suddenly and unexpectedly"; it is the result of "inner conditions"; it is the "pivot" between, the concrete and the abstract, between images and concepts.²⁷ It comes as a result of engagement in inquiry into (at least ordinarily) sense data. It precedes conceiving and formulating. Neither are ideas formed by the mechanical play of sensations, as empiricists allege (for ideas are the contents of conscious acts of understanding), nor are concepts generated by some direct intellectual look at essences as idealists, rationalists, and conceptualists allege (for they are the result of abstracting the contents of the act of understanding). Lonergan's introduction of understanding and its role in the sequence of cognitional acts in his phenomenology of cognition will be a crucial factor in avoiding any notion of the confrontation of subject and object in self-reflection. A key point is that insight is the release of the tension of inquiry. There is nothing about the nature of insight, as we experience it, to suggest that it a

²⁵ *Method*, p. 6.

²⁶ In a personal conversation with the author, Voegelin noted his admiration for this part of *Insight*.

²⁷ *Insight*, pp. 28-30.

priori distorts its contents, including those instances when consciousness is its content. There is, therefore, no a priori “nihilation” of consciousness.

Second, this contention is reinforced when we observe that in Lonergan’s classification the activity of formulating (concepts) is followed by the acts of reflecting, marshaling and weighing the evidence, and judging. “Reflecting” here, not be confused with Sartre’s reflecting, means inquiring about the adequacy of formulations and leads to judgments grounded in “reflective” insights into what constitutes relevant evidence and into whether such evidence exists (the marshaling and weighing). So if proposed concepts make no sense in light of the relevant data, then they must be rejected. Conversely, if they make sense in light of the relevant data, it would be reasonable to affirm them, along as continuum of probability and certainty. Judgment, as it actually occurs in experience, is affirmation or denial of formulations; it is not a synthesis of concepts.²⁸ So, too, if proposed concepts about consciousness make no sense in light of the evidence, then they must be rejected. This is the only “nihilation” of objectifications of consciousness that Lonergan would allow. But, conversely, if they make sense in light of the relevant data, then it would be reasonable to affirm them. This would not be to mutilate subjectivity by making it into some “perceptual object” of methodological control. What, in this case, are the relevant data? Clearly the data are the conscious acts. Thus, according to Lonergan, alongside the data of sensation (to which the subject is present) are the data of consciousness. Yet the acts of consciousness are data in a peculiar way. They are not simply given. They must be performed.

²⁸ Ibid., chap. 9. Judgment is a “positing of synthesis.” Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, vol. 2 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 62, 71.

Third, Lonergan describes the conscious operations as a “pattern.” He is claiming that he has insight into the operations and their relations and that the pattern is intelligible. Is he correct? This question naturally arises. It is part of the spontaneity of consciousness. The same spontaneity is at work in paying attention to consciousness (heightening awareness) and inquiring about the distinct consciousness operations and any possible pattern. To answer the question whether Lonergan’s account is correct would require “reflecting” and considering of the relevant data.

Fourth, the pattern of operations forms intelligible levels that are successive and expansive.²⁹ On the first level are the acts of sensations (or, alternately, the operations of consciousness). This is the level of experiencing. It is the level of data. To say it is the level of data is to say it is functionally related to the other levels. For spontaneously one inquires about the data. The operations, then, of inquiry, understanding, conceiving, and formulating constitute the level of understanding. It is expansive of the first level because its operations act with respect to the level of experiencing and they add a grasp of intelligibility in the data. But one also spontaneously reflects on the adequacy of one’s understanding. Operations of reflecting, weighing and marshaling the evidence, and judging constitute the third and expansive level. Lonergan calls it the level of judging. Thus the process of knowing entails the whole of the operations in their successive and expansive levels.³⁰ A careful phenomenological account of the operations and their functional relations is necessary to avoid the pervasive temptation to identify the process of knowing with a part. Empiricists, for example, focus the level of experience, while idealists pay attention to the level of understanding. In addition, many idealists may conceive of

²⁹*Insight*, pp. 346-348, 370, 377-380, 623, 627; *Method*, pp. 9-10, 18; Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, ed. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 79-81.

³⁰ *Method*, p. 18.

understanding along the lines of an intellectual perception. But the only role perception plays in the process of knowing is on the level of experiencing when inquiry is about the data of sensations.

Fifth, the pattern of operations is not complete with the activities of knowing. Spontaneously one asks what one ought to do in light of what one knows and engages in the operations of deliberating, evaluating, and deciding. This is the existential level of consciousness. It sublates the levels of experiencing, understanding, and judgment because without deliberating, evaluating, and deciding one would not perform the operations on the other levels.³¹

Sixth, obviously, the process described above can be short-circuited. One can be inattentive to the data. One can be obtuse in understanding the data. One can be sloppy in gathering the evidence or precipitous in making judgments. One can be irresponsible in making one's decisions, succumbing to various biases. Failure to engage properly in the process of questioning and perform the operations is the source of error. Thus immanent in the conscious process of questioning in the pattern of cognition and its expansion in the pattern of decision are norms. The criterion of objectivity is fidelity to the norms ingredient in the process. There are no extrinsic norms "out there," as the confrontation theory of truth would demand. These norms can be formulated in what Lonergan calls the transcendental precepts: "be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, and be responsible."³² The normative dimension of the flow of consciousness is self-validating. Any serious attempt to challenge the account of the pattern in terms of the functional relation of the four levels will involve performing the very operations in

³¹ Ibid., pp. 316-17.

³² Ibid., p. 20.

something like the pattern so described.³³ One would need to appeal to better data, claim superior understanding, and insist on better judgment. And surely one would argue that the challenge was indeed responsible.

Seventh, the process of consciousness is normative because it has a directional tendency as its spontaneous flow. The orientation is the direction of questioning. The process spontaneously unfolds with questions for intelligence, questions for reflection and judgment, and questions for deliberation. Embedded in the process of questioning, then, are heuristic anticipations of where the orientation is tending. Lonergan calls these the “transcendental notions” of the intelligible, the true, and the good. They are “notions” and not concepts because, while one’s achievement is always limited and finite, one’s tending in the questions underpinning the process is unrestricted—at least if one is faithful to the norms of the process. Lonergan here has departed radically from Husserl. For, although, Lonergan still employs the term “intentionality” to describe this tending, he has completely broken from the model of perception. Lonergan’s notion of intentionality is modeled on questioning. Thus he uses the term in a manner very different from that of Voegelin. Lonergan’s “intentionality” approximates Voegelin’s “The Question.”³⁴ Lonergan, for example, speaks of the “objective” of the pure unrestricted desire to know, rather than its “object” in any Cartesian or Kantian sense.³⁵ The normative orientation of consciousness—what we can call “basic intentionality”—establishes a basic horizon defined by the transcendental notions.

³³ Ibid., p. 19.

³⁴ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, **vError! Main Document Only.**ol. 4, *The Ecumenic Age*, vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Michael Franz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), pp. 399-400.

³⁵ *Insight*, p. 372. The objective is “being.”

Although this brief treatment cannot do justice to Lonergan's nuanced and distinct philosophy of consciousness (the first three hundred pages of *Insight* are exercises in self-appropriation), we are at least in a position to extrapolate materials from our discussion to sketch the relation of consciousness to knowledge.

Consciousness is not knowledge. It is "internal experience," and consciousness as internal experience is a potential component of knowing. As soon as one heightens one's consciousness and attends to it and inquires about it, one has entered the realm of interpretation of consciousness. The interpretation may be theoretical, as in Lonergan's cognitional theory. It may be common-sensical, as in autobiographical reflections and concrete observations. And it may be non-thematic, as in intersubjective encounter, where images and affects are wedded to experience. As Lonergan defines consciousness, *none* of these three types of self-reflection are the same as consciousness. They are performed consciously, but awareness of the *contents* of these kinds of self-interpretation is not consciousness.

To illustrate in the most extreme case, that of non-thematic interpretation, which seems to bear a likeness to consciousness: Non-thematic interpretations involve what Lonergan calls "elemental meanings," where the meaning must be experienced to be understood.³⁶ For elemental meanings, such experiences as those of images, feelings, gestures, and tone of voice cannot be separated from what is intended or the meaning is lost. This applies to symbolic meaning (e.g., a flag), intersubjective meaning (frequently a spontaneous pattern of gesture, interpretation, and response), and incarnate meaning (deeds, e.g., Marathon, or words, e.g., the Gettysburg Address, that embody the meaning of a group or person). Regardless of how elusive, spontaneous, and compact our awareness of elemental meanings may be, there still remains the

³⁶ *Method*, 57-69.

radical gap between consciousness of the act of meaning and awareness of the intended content. To highlight this radical gap we can turn to the helpful distinction Michael Polanyi has made between two degrees of awareness: *focal awareness* and *subsidiary awareness*.³⁷ To take the example of reading a book, I have a subsidiary awareness of seeing ordered marks on a piece of paper, while I have focal awareness of the meaning of the words signified by those ordered marks.³⁸ This is indeed a powerful analytic distinction -- but, we must note, it is within the field of intended contents of conscious acts. Subsidiary awareness, then, is *not* consciousness. To be sure, non-thematic interpretations held in subsidiary awareness may seem so unreflective, so opaque, so subjective as to be equated with consciousness. *Still they are not*. Consciousness is radically other than any intended content.

Having identified what Lonergan means by consciousness, we are now in a position to consider what Lonergan means by religious consciousness and how Lonergan's approach clarifies and supports Voegelin's claims about the constant in human experience (where experience is not modeled on sense perception).

Let us first return to Voegelin's discussion session at the University of Washington. After Voegelin commented that the sociological professor's genuine questioning was a theophanic event, a member of the audience asked whether Voegelin was referring to being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and reasonable in questioning and oriented by what Lonergan called the transcendental notions. Voegelin responded with appropriate gesture of hands and tone of voice, "Of course."

³⁷ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. vii, 55-65.

³⁸ See *Insight*, p. 577-578.

3. Religious Consciousness

It is notoriously difficult to explore consciousness and know it. Indeed, consciousness is luminous internal experience, but, as experience, it is just a component in knowing. Ordinarily, we gain insights about experience by the use of images.³⁹ Recall that, for Lonergan, insight is the pivot between images and concepts. As we inquire, for example, about sense data, the sensations are organized as perceptions, held in memory, and linked to the free play of images, which, in turn, allow for the creative activity of understanding. The images, it is important to note, usually serve the function of guiding discovery not as presenting a picture of the object sought. The function of images is heuristic not representative.⁴⁰ Euclid, for example, defines a line as a “breathless length.” We cannot think the concept with recourse to some images, but the images cannot picture a line as Euclid defines it because any image will convey spatial extension and hence breadth.⁴¹ But when we are inquiring about consciousness, what are the appropriate images? Perhaps we must have recourse by analogy to what Lonergan calls “virtual images,” whereby images associated with memories of conscious acts or states would serve as clues not as pictures.⁴²

If it is difficult to turn from inquiry about the external world “out there” to inquiry about consciousness without employing perceptual images, it is far more difficult to inquire about religious consciousness. For religious consciousness is not a separate group of operations or a single operation (say of spiritual perception). But it is associated with all the operations of consciousness--and their objects. It is not an operation or set of operations but a state. It is a

³⁹ In the title page of *Insight* Lonergan quotes Aristotle in Greek and later provides his paraphrase: “[F]orms are grasped by mind in the images (699-700). Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3.7, 431b2.

⁴⁰ *Insight*, pp. 43, 116, 283, 323, 465. Lonergan contrasts “free” and “perceptual” images (299).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33. Euclid, *Elements*, 1.def. 2.

⁴² *Insight*, p. 41, where Lonergan applies the notion to the symbolism of one set of operations (he uses the example of mathematics) in relation to a higher viewpoint.

peculiar state with two dimensions. In one dimension is it an orientation to an objective rather than objects. In another dimension-- existentially and concretely related to the first--it has an affective "content" but no objects. Let us unpack these distinctions.

Recall Lonergan's classification of the operations of consciousness through successive and expansive levels. This is an explanatory account, for the operations are all unified as part of a pattern. The unity of consciousness in the pattern is not a construct, such as a transcendental deduction of an ego. The unity of consciousness is prior to any insight, formulation, or reflection about it; it is "given." The unity "concretely is the identity immanent in the diversity and multiplicity of the process."⁴³ Notice the adverb "concretely." The pattern of conscious operations is the process of questioning. The process unfolds with questions for intelligence, continues with questions for reflection about the truth formulations of intelligence, and continues yet again with questions about what is worthwhile. Questions about knowing expand to questions about doing. The whole process is linked by the series of questions. As the conscious operations unfold on expansive levels, experienced as qualitatively distinct, the inquirer is engaged in a process of self-transcendence. The questions are conscious, the spontaneous links among the questions are conscious, and so the person who inquires experiences the conscious unity of the process. The person, however, must perform the operations in fidelity to the spontaneous norms, the transcendental precepts, immanent in the process. The process of questioning, then, is the determinant of the normative direction within the consciousness. Voegelin, who argues that the "I" seems to be a "complex symbol" for certain determinants of the direction of consciousness, denies that the "I" is given.⁴⁴ But in this passage he is primarily refuting Husserl's notion of a transcendental ego that constitutes its objects (which bears a family

⁴³ Ibid., p. 350.

⁴⁴ Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, p. 67.

resemblance to Descartes' *cogito*). Lonergan would join Voegelin in focusing instead on the concrete consciousness of a concrete person, or, as Lonergan puts it, "Descartes's *cogito* transposed to concrete living."⁴⁵

We have thus differentiated two important aspects of consciousness. On the one hand, we have the conscious operations in the pattern. They are concrete operations dealing with specific questions, usually about specific objects, at specific stages in the process of inquiry. On the other hand, we have the determinant of the direction of consciousness. It is that which underpins the flow of the operations. It is a flow of questioning presence. In Lonergan's terminology (not Husserl's and not Voegelin's) it is basic intentionality. It is basic because it is the questioning that unfolds in all questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation. It is intentionality because it is oriented by the questions. It is a seeking, a questing. Lonergan also calls it "transcendental" to identify its underpinning role.⁴⁶ But it is a conscious underpinning prior to any interpretation (including a Kantian transcendental deduction). The orientation is captured, for Lonergan, in the transcendental notions of the intelligible, the true, and the good. It is, furthermore, normative. It is only by performing in the process of questioning faithfully that one attains anything approximating objectivity. There are no norms extrinsic to the process as the picture-thinking, perceptualist model would allege. Hence any claim that the idea of the basic intention is wishful thinking or pragmatic make-believe would involve a performative contradiction by virtue of engaging in the very process and appealing to its standard in order to deny it. That the norms of questioning are immanent in the process is illustrated in the case of making judgment about a formulation of intelligence, whether a

⁴⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, vol.18 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp.215, 316.

⁴⁶ *Method*, p. 11.

commonsensical judgment of fact or a scientific judgment about a hypothesis. The operative criterion—that is, the actual way we consciously perform in the process—when we make an objective affirmative judgment is that there are “no more relevant questions.”⁴⁷ This is fidelity to the process of inquiry. We must be faithful to the openness of inquiry and not succumb to various biases that would block, short-circuit, or distort the process. The same kind of criterion is consciously operative in moral life. We make an “objective” moral evaluation when there are no further relevant questions. This is felt consciously as a “good conscience.”⁴⁸ This does not mean that the drive to question is limited and will be fulfilled at some point (perhaps by a system of propositions). On the contrary, it is precisely because the drive to question is unrestricted that it is the immanent law of objectivity.⁴⁹ It opposes all obscurantism. As one set of questions is answered, that set becomes the base for asking further questions, and so the horizon of questioning expands, and knowledge increases. Fidelity to the process of questioning will not arbitrarily stop the process. Its goal is unrestricted. Lonergan underscores that this normative and unrestricted character of the self-transcending process of questioning is in consciousness by explicitly referring to Voegelin’s language of the “luminosity of consciousness.” Lonergan refers to “inner light, “the light that raises questions and, when answers are insufficient, keeps raising further questions.”⁵⁰

The basic intentionality is not a conscious operation; it is a conscious state. It is also affectively charged. Lonergan’s phenomenology of consciousness not only treats cognitive and volitional operations but also affective states. Indeed associated with the qualitatively different

⁴⁷ *Insight*, p. 309, where Lonergan calls it “the immanent law of cognitional process.”

⁴⁸ *Method*, pp. 35, 40, 268-69.

⁴⁹ *Insight*, p. 404.

⁵⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 193..

levels of consciousness are different affective moods (approximating Heidegger's notion of *Befindlichkeit*, existential dispositions that cannot be reduced to psychological drives or motives). So a commentator on Lonergan suggests that the affective moods of wonder, doubt, and anxiety accompany, respectively, the levels of understanding, judging, and deliberating.⁵¹ But the pervasive affectivity of the entire process of questioning is longing and desire for the objective of questioning in its unrestricted sweep. Questioning is, therefore, self-transcendent openness to the unrestricted. The reality sought in the self-transcending process of inquiry is correlative to the unrestricted nature of the questioning. Because the norms of objectivity are immanent in this very process of questioning, it would be a performative contradiction to dismiss the whole process as wish fulfillment and to dismiss the notion of the objective as meaningless. The objective of the unrestricted self-transcending process of questioning is transcendent mystery. We must emphasize here that the unrestricted longing for transcendent mystery is in consciousness. It is not itself knowledge. And given the elusiveness of its objective, which could easily be identified with an object or set of objects in the world, it is not surprising that it may be very difficult to know. This is because the objective of the unrestricted openness of questioning is a "known unknown."⁵² It is known because it is in the field of questioning and the process of questioning is normative for our sense of reality. It is unknown because we have no adequate answers to the unrestricted demand of the question. In Lonergan's words, "Though the field of mystery is contracted by the advance of knowledge, it cannot be eliminated from human living. In brief, there is always the further question."⁵³ The affectivity of the unrestricted

⁵¹ Morelli, Elizabeth, *Anxiety: A Study of the Affective Mood of Moral Consciousness* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985).

⁵² *Insight*, 555-558; *Phenomenology and Logic*, pp. 197-98.

⁵³ *Insight*, p. 570. Roy uses Kant's term "boundary, as expounded in the *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, as a helpful reference to permanent demarcation between the known and known unknown, in contrast to a "limit," which can be surpassed. Roy, *Transcendent Experiences*, p. 44.

question takes on its tone because it is oriented to the “known unknown,” which Lonergan describes as “the sphere of the unexplored and strange, of the undefined surplus of significance and momentousness.”⁵⁴ Myth is therefore a genuine and permanent form of interpreting the content of the sphere of mystery.⁵⁵

The unrestricted longing for transcendent mystery is religious experience in one of its dimensions—the dimension of human seeking at full operative capacity. Lonergan and Voegelin both see it at the core of human nature. Voegelin in commenting on the limits of Aristotle’s definition of human nature as form (because form can only be realized in action) sees Aristotle as struggling to relate human nature to the divine ground: “Hence at its core human nature is the openness of questioning and knowing questioning about the ground.”⁵⁶ Lonergan points to Aristotle’s definition of nature (*physis*) to draw a similar conclusion. Aristotle defines *physis* as an “internal principle of change and rest.”⁵⁷ Thus for a sapling there is an inborn tendency to grow into the form of a mature oak tree. What, then, is the internal principle behind human development? The answer Lonergan says is the activity of questioning, which moves the inquirer in the tension of activity (in the questioning unrest) and which also carries the norms of “rest” in the immanent criterion of objectivity. But there are many questions and many types of questions. Is there an overriding principle of change and rest, itself a nature? Yes, says Lonergan: there is “a tidal movement that begins *before* consciousness unfolds through sensitivity, intelligence, rational reflection, responsible deliberation, only to find its rest beyond

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 556.

⁵⁵ See Thomas J. McPartland, *Lonergan and Historiography: The Epistemological Philosophy of History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), chap. 4.

⁵⁶ Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, p. 175.

⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.1.195b21-22.

all of these.”⁵⁸ What is the rest beyond these? It is an unrestricted state of being-in-love. This is religious consciousness in its second dimension—the dimension of being moved, being drawn, being gifted with openness. This is mystical consciousness.⁵⁹

If the religious dimension of unrestricted longing differentiates the underpinning intentionality of the pattern of operations from the operations, the religious dimension of mystical consciousness “engulfs” the intentionality and the operations. It is no additional operation or set of operation, and it is no additional intentional state. It is an affective state. Indeed in ordinary life there is a state of affective self-transcendence that places all of our operations, cognitive, moral, and affective, under the subsuming context of interpersonal commitment.⁶⁰ This is the state of “being-in-love,” and in ordinary life it extends from sexual relationships to family to friends and acquaintances to local and national communities to humanity at large.⁶¹ In mystical consciousness, however, affective self-transcendence is experienced as total: it is without restrictions, limitations, qualifications, conditions, or reservations.⁶² As experienced as total, one is “held, grasped, possessed, owed through a total and so otherworldly love.”⁶³ It is can be affectivity experienced as a sense of mystery, fascination, awe, even terror.⁶⁴ Ordinarily mystical experience “remains within subjectivity as a vector, an undertow, a fateful call to a dreaded holiness.”⁶⁵ It is an undertow of existential

⁵⁸ *Third Collection*, p. 175.

⁵⁹ We are adopting the terminology of Louis Roy, in his *Mystical Consciousness*, who relies heavily on Lonergan’s analysis.

⁶⁰ *Method*, p. 289.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 105, 289.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106, 240-242. The subject is “held, grasped, possessed, owed through a total and so otherworldly love.” *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

consciousness.⁶⁶ Hence the mystic “letting lapse all words, symbols, images, and thoughts,” can fall into a silent and all-absorbing “self-surrender.”⁶⁷ This is the “cloud of unknowing.”⁶⁸ It can be described, as it is by Ignatius Loyola, as “consolation without a cause.”⁶⁹ Although Lonergan acknowledges that “mystical attainment is manifold” and that the experience can resonate differently in different temperaments and in different stages of religious development—which points to our next topic of historicity and the manifold interpretations of religious consciousness—the main component of mystical experience is the affective state of participating in unrestricted love. Let us review some of the key terms we have just considered: call, undertow of consciousness, silent surrender, unknowing, consolation with no cause, withdrawal. Mystical experience is *sui generis* as consciousness with no object and no specific content. But it has content: participation in unrestricted love. The content is suffused throughout the experience of consoling self-surrender (of the ego). Along with the self-surrender is openness not as aspiration or demand but openness experienced as given, as a “gift” of participation.⁷⁰

The two dimensions of religious consciousness can indeed be distinguished as longing and as participation, but this does not mean they are separate. If the longing is, as Lonergan and Voegelin claim, the core of human nature, the participation can be interpreted as supernatural. While this classification may not be wrong, it can be misleading if it is part of some conceptualist metaphysical speculation on possible worlds that would isolate a “pure” human

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 240.

⁶⁷ *Method*, pp. 105, 240, 342.

⁶⁸ In Ibid., pp. 29, 278, 342, Lonergan cites William Johnston's, *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing* (New York: Desclee, 1967); in “Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of our Time,” Third Collection, p. 67, he cites the same author's *The Still Point* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), *Christian Zen* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), and *Silent Music: The Science of Meditation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974). Johnston in his book, *The Inner Eye of Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 10, claims to follow “the method of Bernard Lonergan.”

⁶⁹ *Method*, p. 106.

⁷⁰ *Collection*, pp. 85-87.

nature. In the concrete consciousness of concrete persons the longing and the participation can both be present and ordinarily are involved in a complex relation.

We are speaking here of the concrete unity of consciousness. What is the link between the *telos* of unrestricted questioning and the experience of transcendent love? And what accounts for the spontaneity of questions for intelligence, the spontaneity of questions for reflection, the spontaneity of questions for deliberation? What “cooperates” with understanding, judgment, and deliberation in “sending up” images and memories to facilitate insight? What moves inquiry to ever higher levels of self-transcendence? The answer to all these questions, for Lonergan, is the same: the unconscious. The unity of human being penetrates down to the unconscious.⁷¹ Recall that Lonergan described basic intentionality as a tidal movement that begins *before* consciousness. Mystical consciousness engulfs conscious intentionality and its operations. We cannot in this paper go into detail about Lonergan’s process cosmology of “emergent provability” and its notion of the immanent intelligibility of the emerging higher integrations (drawing on Bergson, from whom Lonergan borrows the term “finality”).⁷² But we can point out that human longing for the transcendent is part of the immanent cosmic process of emergence, as found, for example, in certain images and affects arising from the dynamic unconscious.⁷³ And world process, though radically differentiated from transcendence reality, is not necessarily, in the concrete order of things, without divine presence. Similarly, Voegelin argues for a kind of process metaphysics, perhaps one with affinity to Shelling’s *Potenzlehre*,

⁷¹ *Third Collection*, p. 132.

⁷² *Insight*, pp. 141-154, 470-476, 490-91, 655-56, 687-88; McPartland, Lonergan and the Philosophy of historical Existence, chap. 2. See William A. Mathews, *Lonergan’s Quest: A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 377, for Lonergan’s debt to Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*; see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965-1980*, vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 387, for Lonergan’s reference to Bergson’s *élan vital*.

⁷³ *Insight*, p. 482, with a reference to Jung’s archetypal symbols.

where cosmic and human and historical development is encompassed by divine presence.⁷⁴ He argues that Aristotle is correct in his “synthetic” view of human reality as a unity of manifolds, ranging, along an ascending scale, from the apeironic depths to the inorganic, the organic, the animal, and the noetic levels.⁷⁵ With this in mind perhaps we can see in Voegelin’s writings a parallel to Lonergan’s notion of religious experience that “engulfs” conscious intentionality and its operations and to the dynamic unconscious from which unfolds the unrestricted desire of basic intentionality. Voegelin says there is a constant justifying the language of equivalent experiences and symbols. The constant is the “depth.”⁷⁶ Descent into the “depth” occurs when thinkers engage with full openness to the process of questioning. This language, we can infer, is also carefully crafted to avoid any reference to experiences as perceptions. Voegelin wants to preserve consciousness as consciousness even as he speaks of what is deeper than consciousness. What is surely deeper than perceptions and reflections on consciousness is the conscious process of questioning flowing as a tidal wave from the unconscious and heading beyond.

4. Basic Horizon and Religious Pluralism: The Dialectic of Performance and Interpretation

The radical distinction we made between consciousness and knowledge does not imply a radical separation or dualism. Consciousness is not a worldless Cartesian cogito. We have said that religious consciousness “engulfs” the basic intentionality of conscious operations. Thus it is at the heart of basic horizon, a universal viewpoint, defined by the transcultural and normative orientation of consciousness described above. The previous discussion argues for the notion of

⁷⁴ Eric Voegelin, *History of Political Ideas*, vol. 7, *The New Order and Last Orientation*, vol. 25 of *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Jurgen Gebhardt and Thomas A. Hollweck (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), pp. 193-242, esp. 208-209; Jerry Day, *Voegelin, Shelling, and the Philosophy of Historical Existence* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

⁷⁵ Voegelin *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, pp. 267-268, 289-290.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 123-26.

basic horizon. But basic horizon does not exist by itself as a freely floating consciousness. It is always embedded in relative horizons, of persons, communities, and historical periods, with diverse institutions, cultures, and traditions. Basic horizon, as the basic orientation of consciousness, is the constant, or identity, in history; relative horizons are the difference.

Identity by its very dynamism demands difference while still remaining identity. What cultural ideals, social norms, scientific theories, philosophical articulations can match the unrestrictedness of the pure desire to know? What interpretations of the transcendental intentionality of religious longing can satisfy that very intentionality? What interpretations of the elusive and objectless mystic consciousness can satisfactorily capture its essence? What myths of transcendent mystery can be definitive? The images and symbols and narratives of the Paleolithicum, a period of undifferentiated consciousness, would lose power and efficacy for the high civilizations of early antiquity. The differentiation of transcendence in the universal religions and in philosophy will render the early myths inadequate. The scientific revolution will challenge the effectiveness of symbols using the pre-Copernican cosmos an analogy. We are only touching upon the diverse interpretations framing relative horizons. They encompass the entirety of human history. We can thus speak of the dialectic of basic horizon and relative horizons.

The dialectic of basic horizon and relative horizons is intimately tied to the hermeneutical nature of human existence. This we see in the dialectic of performance and interpretation. Human performance in the various conscious operations and states provides data on human reality. Inquiry into the data of consciousness then establishes interpretations of human reality. The interpretations can be sedimented in technologies and institutions and embodied in cultural traditions. The interpretations, in turn, establish the frameworks for future performance. Herein

we find the dynamics of history. Interpretations can be distorted or insightful. They can lead to decline or promote progress or, as is more commonplace, support both decline and progress.

How does this apply to religious consciousness? Let us consider a passage where Lonergan says religious consciousness can “withdraw from home and country, from human cares and human ambitions, from the clamour of the senses and the entanglements of the social surd, to fix its gaze on the unseen ultimate, to respond to an impalpable presence, to grow inward to the stature of eternity.”⁷⁷ There is first the withdrawal. Already interpretations may be at work inviting the withdrawal. For example, certain events, such as an aesthetic contemplation of the sublime or an “earth-shattering” interpersonal encounter, may force attention to the unrestricted longing oriented to transcendence.⁷⁸ This leads to insights into the experiences. As a result the person may seek to cultivate those experiences through meditative practices. But what the practices may be is contingent on the historical situation. Whether any practices are available may depend on the historical situation. If the withdrawal takes place, this leads to responding and to growing. These activities themselves will engender interpretations. And the mystic experience itself may incite the unrestricted longing to know what is the source or ground of the participatory experience. In brief, mythical experience can be a response to the unrestricted longing, but the unrestricted longing can also be a response to mystical experience. Furthermore, religious consciousness is the consciousness of a concrete person, and so the interpretation of the experience and the tone of the experience itself will reflect the uniqueness of the person. The connection of the two dimensions of religious consciousness is intricate and woven into the complicated and historically contingent fabric of interpretations.

⁷⁷ *Insight*, pp. 748-49.

⁷⁸ Aesthetic, ontological, ethical, and interpersonal examples are given by Roy in *Transcendent Experiences*, chap. 2.

We thus have the constant in religious consciousness with its two dimensions and, by internal necessity, a pluralism of religious interpretations, personal, communal, and historical. Because of the constant, the religious consciousness (the infinite longing and the unrestricted state of love), there is no danger of succumbing to historicism and adopting the constructivist approach mentioned at the beginning of this paper. On the other hand, because of the notion of consciousness as non-perceptive self-presence articulated by Lonergan there is no danger of accepting the perennialist idea of a universal religious perception.

Let us conclude by briefly mentioning the implications of our analysis in three historical cases.

If Cro-Magnons are human (and if, as Barry Cooper has argued, Neanderthals are human), then there is no reason a priori to rule out of court that certain drawings on the caves may express religious consciousness, though they probably do so in a framework of a culture that had not differentiated transcendence, insofar as we can tell from the evidence. But if that were the case, they did not differentiate immanence either. They had to express transcendence in a diffused manner.⁷⁹

If the Cro-Magnons had religious consciousness, then, according to Lonergan, the participants in the later traditions of revealed religion had essentially the same religious consciousness. Revelation was not some new religious experience as perception, some message to be looked at “out there” or “in here.” Lonergan conceives “revelation” not as the immediacy of religious consciousness but as an “outer word” in the world of interpretations, an “outer word”

⁷⁹Barry Cooper, “Politics” and “Religion” in the Upper Paleolithic: A Voegelinian Analysis of Some Selected Problems, <http://www.lsu.edu/artsci/groups/voegelin/society/2011%20Papers/Barry%20Cooper.pdf>; “The First Mystics? Some recent Accounts of Neolithic Shamanism,” <http://www.lsu.edu/artsci/groups/voegelin/society/2010%20Papers/Barry%20Cooper2.pdf>.

of a tradition that has accumulated spiritual wisdom. In putting it this way, Lonergan is not necessarily making humans or the human community the sole author of the “outer word.” He wants to emphasize the “outer word’s” resonance with religious consciousness and avoid misleading perceptualist analogies. “*Cor ad cor loquitor*,” he says, is the resonance: “love speaks to love, and its speech is powerful. The religious leader, the prophet, the Christ ... announces in signs and symbols what is congruent with the gift of love that God works within us.”⁸⁰

Religious consciousness is present, too, in secular society, as the sociology professor hearing Voegelin’s talk was astounded to hear—indeed it was present in his apparent conscious pursuit of his questions. Modern secular society is aware of the possibility of distorted interpretations of religious consciousness, as it sees in the dogmas of religious fanatics, who bear the hallmarks of closed existence not unrestricted openness. It is less aware of the possibility of secular distortions of religious consciousness. This includes ignorance of the complicated process of spiritual maturation and perpetual struggle. For religious consciousness is potent and dangerous. Lonergan speaks of the “tripartite tension” of existence: we must negotiate the tension of limitation and transcendence with the tension of participation in unrestricted love.⁸¹ This approximates Kierkegaard’s definition of the self as a relation (finite and infinite) that relates itself to itself (negotiates the relation) as a derived relation (unrestricted love).⁸² If the longing for the infinite is publicly denied, explained away, ridiculed, then the longing (in an act of idolatry) may attach itself to substitute objects in the form of political movements, pouring

⁸⁰ *Method*, p. 113.

⁸¹ *Insight*, pp. 747-49.

⁸² Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 13-14.

infinite concern onto these projects. The placid secular world may then be shocked by these intrusions, as happened in the twentieth century with the totalitarian movements of Bolshevism and National Socialism. There must be room for discourse about religious consciousness in the political culture. If Lonergan and Voegelin are correct that religious consciousness is at the core of human nature, then this is a desideratum.