

Bernard Lonergan's Notion of Truth From Augustine through Thomas Aquinas

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In this paper, I hope to introduce Bernard Lonergan's understanding of truth as this exists in the nature and structure of human judgment. However, since Lonergan's understanding of truth does not exist in a vacuum, because it partially derives from earlier reflections on the nature of truth, I shall begin with a note on how St. Augustine understood truth and from there proceed to St. Thomas Aquinas. For many years, Lonergan read deeply into the philosophy and theology of Aquinas and, as one looks at Aquinas's understanding of truth, one finds a line of development that moves within Catholic thought toward the kind of analysis which Lonergan offers in his theory of truth that attempts to meet a number of concerns and questions which have arisen in the current development of modern philosophy in the West.

Beginning with St. Augustine, to understand his notion of truth, one might begin by looking at four scattered passages taken from his *Confessions* (the 4th and 5th books) which explain why, for many years, St. Augustine held a number of erroneous beliefs.¹ These read as follows:

My mind still moved through corporeal forms; I defined the beautiful as that which is attractive in itself, and the fitting as that which is attractive because suited to something. I made this distinction and bolstered it with corporeal examples. I turned my attention on the nature of the mind, yet the false opinion which I had concerning spiritual things did not permit me to see the truth. The very force of the true was assaulting my eyes, yet I turned my throbbing mind from the incorporeal reality to shapes and colors and swollen masses, and, since I could not see these within the conscious soul, I was of the opinion that I could not see my soul.

...it seemed disgraceful to me to believe that Thou wert possessed of the shape of human flesh and limited by the bodily outlines of corporeal parts. And since, when I wished to think of my God, I knew no way of thinking, except in terms of corporeal mass (for it seemed to me that nothing whatever existed which was not like that), in that lay the greatest and practically the only reason for my inescapable error.

I also felt it was better for me to believe that Thou hadst created no evil (which in my ignorance seemed to be not only a substance, but even something corporeal, for I did not know how to think even of a mind except as being a subtle body, a body, however, spread out in different parts of space)...

If I had been able to think of a spiritual substance, all their stratagems would have been immediately destroyed and cast away from my mind. But, I could not. In

¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1953), pp. 94, 120-1, 127.

truth, I did decide, by making more and more considerations and comparisons, that most of the philosophers had views which are much more probable, concerning the corporeal aspects of this world and every nature accessible to bodily sensation.

In his early years, Augustine could not conceive of how anything real could be anything other than some kind of body which one sees or imagines. What is real is what is known through an act of sense and not by any other kind of act. If something is true, it is because it is experienced by an act of sense. Truth is associated with corporeality, a position which Augustine adheres to until he encounters difficulties which cannot be resolved until he comes to another view on the nature of truth.

In the 7th Book of the *Confessions*, as one rereads this text, Augustine's struggles begin to assume a shape and form which evidence a number of stages that lead him to a new notion of truth. Augustine is faced with a problem. How to account for the existence of evil? What is its cause? Evil undoubtedly exercises a great influence in the world. Can its existence really be denied? But, how can evil be explained if, on the one hand, God exists as a supremely good and powerful being? The two do not jive. The existence of evil appears to undermine the reasonableness of belief in an all powerful, perfect deity. And so, as Augustine begins his discussion, he admits that, initially, he could not conceive of anything real if it cannot be sensed or imagined.² Hence, it would follow that evil is to be understood as some kind of sensible, corporeal thing whose existence is a source of suffering and trial. However, if evil exists as a source of suffering and trial and God is supremely powerful, incorruptible, and good who cannot but make things that are good and not evil, then it cannot be said that God has brought evil into existence. Evil cannot be regarded as a created thing. And, at the same time, it cannot be regarded as an uncreated thing since, if this were so, evil would be on a par with God who is entirely lacking in any kind of imperfection and who cannot be said to suffer from any kind of evil. Necessarily, what is incorruptible and what is corruptible exclude each other. As Augustine says it, "the incorruptible is better than the corruptible."³ And so, in the end, it is not possible to speak of evil as a being or reality (whether created or uncreated). Evil is something which lacks being or reality. It is not a thing; it is not what Augustine refers to as a "substance." However, if evil is to exist (and it does exist), its existence presupposes things which are goods since the existence of any given thing is itself a good.⁴ Mere existence is a good even if it is a minimal good. Evil cannot exist unless good first exists through the being or existence of different things. Hence, if some kind of meaning is to be apprehended as regards the cause or meaning of good, this cause is a privation of some kind in concretely existing things. Evil, moral evil, is a perversity which exists within the will or the willing of rational beings.⁵ It is an internal thing which cannot be experienced by any act of sense, but which can only be known through a process of self-reflection which identifies an act of consciousness which exists within a person (as opposed to an extroverted act of sense). Evil is not caused by God but by rational beings who change themselves, becoming bad beings through misusing the freedom which they have in rebelling against God and the order of things which God

²*Confessions*, 7, 1, 1-2.

³*Confessions*, 7, 4, 6.

⁴*Confessions*, 7, 12, 18.

⁵*Confessions*, 7, 16, 22.

has created.⁶ A truth is known not by an act of sense but as the conclusion of an inquiry and by arguments which have moved from acts of sense to realities that are known as the term of some form of self-reflection. Hence, truths are not simply known. No simple, single act accounts for the knowing or the existence of any truth within one's mind. What is given by the bodily senses is to be distinguished from what is given by the "light of our minds."⁷

Turning to Aquinas's notion of truth and an understanding which rejects any thesis which would try to argue that truth is known by a simple, single act, Aquinas speaks of two operations of the mind that relate to acts of sense in a way which leads to experiences of truth. The starting point is an inquiry into the nature or the form of scientific inquiry. What does a scientific question consist of? What is its meaning? And so, in trying to answer this question, Aquinas noticed that, in the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle had postulated that all questions can be reduced to four basic types: whether there is an *X*; what is an *X*; whether *X* is *Y*; and why *X* is *Y*. However, as one examines Aristotle's subsequent discussion, one finds that he reduces these questions to two basic types.⁸ The first basic type groups together "What is an *X*" and "why *X* is *Y*", because these can only be answered by offering or postulating an hypothesis which can relate a number of elements or parts into a relation. The second basic type groups together "whether there is an *X*" and "whether *X* is *Y*", because these can be answered by only saying either "yes" or "no." The responses between the first and second totally differs. The prior asking of what and why questions creates an orientation that determines specific activities which a potential knower must engage in if an answer is to be found for a specific type of question. But, this orientation is quite unlike a second orientation which is created when matters of fact have to be decided through a second, distinct form of inquiry. As Aquinas argues, for instance, in his *De Anima*, acts are distinguished from each another on the basis of the different objects which they intend or desire.⁹ Hence, a "first operation of the mind" (*prima mentis operatio*) proceeds from a first set of questions that have a distinct object, but this operation prepares the way for a "second operation of the mind" (*secunda mentis operatio*) which follows a second set of questions that have an object that differs from the object sought by the first set of questions.¹⁰ Thus, human knowing functions in a self-assembling way as it moves through a number of stages. Although human knowing begins with human sensing, through a dialectic of questions and answers constitutive of human inquiry, it passes from the givenness of experience toward an apprehension of form or meaning, and from form or meaning toward an apprehension of truth or reality. Citing Aquinas's own words, "the first operation of the intellect regards the quiddity [essence or "whatness"] of a thing; the second regards its existence or being."¹¹

⁶*Confessions*, 7, 3, 5.

⁷*City of God against the Pagans*, 8, 7.

⁸Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 2, 2, 89b36-90a6; Aquinas, *In Aristotelis libros Posteriorum analyticorum*, 2, 1.

⁹Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata De anima*, a. 13.

¹⁰Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 6, 9, 1239. "In speculative matters...there is a twofold operation of reason: first, to discover through inquiry and, then, to judge about the discoveries," my translation. In the *Quaestiones de quodlibet* 2, q. 2, a. 1, it is noted that "the question 'Is it?' is different from the question 'What is it?'"

¹¹Aquinas, *Super I Sententiarum*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7; cf. Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 4, a. 2; q. 3, a. 2; q. 14, a. 1; and *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 6, 4, 1232. In the *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3, Aquinas speaks of two mental operations:

Understanding refers to “intellectual apprehension” while wisdom refers to “intellectual judgment.”¹² Human knowing possesses its own finality or telos as it moves from lack of understanding toward a fuller understanding that concludes in a form of understanding which is referred to as judgment. The human mind exercises a specific causality of its own as it moves towards a knowledge of reality by a means whose term is an act of judgment.

To understand Aquinas’s notion of truth, one must accordingly try to understand his notion of judgment where, by uttering a “yes” or a “no,” a person either affirms or denies that a possible fact or actuality exists. Relations between things are either affirmed or denied as facts since, in judgment, a synthesis is posited or denied through an assent which leads one to realize that, essentially, “to know...is...to judge.”¹³ Through judgments, through truth, persons connect with reality since, in every judgment, something real is known through a truth that is posited in a judgment.¹⁴ Truth and being are convertible. By a second operation of the mind, a meaning is pondered and considered in a manner which hopefully will lead to an affirmation of truth or reality.¹⁵ In order to make a judgment, a detached, contemplative type of attitude is required if a person is to engage in acts of reflective understanding which are constitutive of judgment.

A person has already engaged in acts of sense and initial acts of understanding which grasp a meaning. But now, the object is a kind of self-reflection that can fully turn back on itself to think about what proportion exists between mind and thing: one’s understanding and what one’s understanding is apprehending. Does a conformity exist between mind and object if a knowledge of reality is to exist in the understanding of a potential knower?¹⁶ In other words, is one’s

The intellect has two operations, one called the “understanding of indivisibles,” by which it knows *what* a thing is; and another by which it composes and divides, that is to say, by forming affirmative and negative enunciations. Now these two operations correspond to two principles in things. The first operation has regard to the nature itself of a thing, in virtue of which the known thing holds a certain rank among beings, whether it be a complete thing, as some whole, or an incomplete thing, as a part or an accident. The second operation has regard to a thing’s act of existing (*esse*), which results from the union of the principles of a thing in composite substances, or, as in the case of simple substances, accompanies the thing’s simple nature.

Cf. Aquinas, *De Potentia*, q. 8, a. 1, c.; q. 9, a. 5 c.; *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, 5, a. 9 c.; and *Lectura Super Ioannem*, c. 1, lect. 1.

¹²Aquinas, *Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 7, 672.

¹³Aquinas, *Peri Hermeneias*, 1, 3, 4, cited by Peter Hoenen, *Reality and Judgment according to St. Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 6, my translation.

¹⁴*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 9, 6.

¹⁵*Sententia Libri De anima*, 1, 8, 125; *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 6, 4, 1236.

¹⁶*De Veritate*, q. 1, aa. 1-3; *Summa Theologiae*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 3.

experience of understanding the same as an experience of knowing?¹⁷ “Distinctions drawn by the mind are not necessarily equivalent to distinctions in reality.”¹⁸ One can understand the form of a thing without necessarily knowing whether or not its form exists.¹⁹ While an identity already exists in one’s understanding between one’s initial act of understanding and that which is understood, how does one move toward an identity between one’s being *as a knower* and the being of what is known which, in its existence, is to be clearly distinguished from the natural existence of a knower who, through reflective understanding, wants to know a being which is other than himself and *as other than himself*?

Since a prospective judgment seeks a different kind of intelligibility which is other than the answer to a “what” or “why” question, the intelligibility which properly belongs to judgment works from a different basis or ground. If an intelligibility is to be affirmed as real, it now needs to be verified with evidence which can move the mind of any thoughtful inquirer *from within* toward a completely free, rational assent.²⁰ In the self-reflection which occurs in judgment, because all initial acts of human understanding move from outer senses to internal activities that apprehend a meaning or form, a judgment always begins with a form of self-reflection that goes back and attends to the acts or operations that have been employed to reach both acts and terms of acts of understanding which are now under review and which also lead to an understanding of one’s own human understanding.²¹ One adverts to the links which had previously connected one’s previous acts of understanding and with their corresponding images or phantasms that have been grasped through acts of sense and imagination. In judgment, one assumes a greater degree of personal responsibility as now, by a form of self-measuring, in one’s self-understanding, persons judge

¹⁷*Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 11, 760; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 16, a. 2. Cf. William E. Murnion, “Intellectual Honesty in Aquinas and Lonergan,” (paper presented at the Third International Lonergan Workshop, Erbacher Hof, Mainz, Germany, January 2-7, 2007), pp. 4-5.

¹⁸*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 50, a. 2, quoted in *St. Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts*, trans. by Thomas Gilby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 13, n. 40.

¹⁹*De ente et essentia*, 4, 6. Cf. *Quaestio disputata De anima*, a. 6; *De Potentia*, 7, 2, ed. 9; *Quaestiones de quodlibet*, 2, q. 2, a. 1. As Aquinas had argued in the *De ente et essentia*, 4, 6; translated as *On Being and Essence* by Armand Maurer (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949) p. 46:

...every essence or quiddity can be understood without anything being known of its existing. I can know what a man or a phoenix is and still be ignorant whether it exists in reality. From this it is clear that the act of existing is other than essence or quiddity, unless, perhaps, there is a being whose quiddity is its very act of existing.

Cf. Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change? The World’s Becoming in the Incarnation* (Still River, Massachusetts: St. Bede’s Publications, 1985), p. 75; *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), p. 121.

²⁰*De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 1; cf. *De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1, obj. 10.

²¹*De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 9; *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 5, 11, 912; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2.

themselves with respect to the character and quality of their understanding.²²

To identify which conditions have to be met if one is to make a valid claim that one really knows something in particular, in Aquinas, true meaning only emerges through a kind of reduction or resolution to the first principles of intellect and sense, a *resolutio in principia*, which is effected by human reasoning and which makes conscious how previous human reasoning had moved from initial experiences of sense to later experiences of understanding.²³ In judgment, as in abstractive understanding, one moves from effects to causes, or from consequences to sources. There are two major steps. First, one works with one's previous understanding to identify the particular act of understanding that had led one to apprehend a form within matter,²⁴ a form which presents itself as an idea or hypothesis. In doing this, one wants to determine all the relevant principles which had informed one's mind in a way which had led to one's act of understanding.²⁵ One starts with the possible meaning under investigation, a form or essence which currently exists within one's mind and, from it, one moves toward identifying the various primary and secondary principles which had allowed one to move from experience and inquiry to an act of understanding which, in a spiritual way, had detached or abstracted a meaning from one's experience of sense data. A prospective judgment first identifies secondary principles which are most immediately present and, from them, one then goes to the first principles which are also given in the cognitive awareness of one's self as an inquirer. Together, as one lines up these principles in their relations to each other, one moves in a sequence which passes from one principle to another: from demonstrable first principles which exist as secondary principles within a particular discipline toward undemonstrable first principles which refer to the basic laws of human mind.²⁶ For example, when one thinks of an undemonstrable first principle, one thinks of the law of non-contradiction. In Aquinas's own words, "the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time."²⁷ One attends to how secondary principles are ordered to primary first principles. What principles have been invoked in moving from common first principles to specific secondary principles and then to the term of an act of understanding which allegedly discovers a new intelligible relation that had not been known before? What principles exist in one's intellectual consciousness which have led to conceptions whose truth one is now trying to judge? By such principles, as Aquinas says, "we judge all things."²⁸

Then, and secondly, one works with acts and data of sense to determine relevant acts and content of acts.²⁹ Since first operations of the mind grasp forms in phantasms (insights into data), the

²²*De Veritate*, q. 24, a. 2.

²³*De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 1; a. 8, ad 10; q. 11, a. 1, ad 13; q. 12, a. 1; a. 3; q. 14, a. 1; a. 9; q. 15, a. 1; q. 17, a. 1; q. 22, a. 2; q. 24, a. 2; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 7; q. 79, a. 8; cf. a. 12; 1a2ae, q. 74, a. 7.

²⁴*De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 9.

²⁵*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 47, 7.

²⁶*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 112, a. 5.

²⁷*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2; 2a2ae, q. 1, a. 7. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 18, a. 6; *On the Eternity of the World against the Grumblers*, cited by *An Aquinas Reader*, ed. Mary T. Clark (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1972), p. 179.

²⁸*De Veritate*, q. 8, a. 7, ad 3 (4th set of objections).

²⁹*De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 9.

identification of first and secondary principles necessarily turns to determining the prior acts of sense which, in the first place, had provided materials for the inquiries and activities of an agent intellect which seek to abstract a form or meaning from an imagined phantasm or datum of sense. As Aquinas notes, “since the senses are the first source of our knowledge, we must in some way reduce to sense everything about which we judge.”³⁰ For every act of sense, a corresponding content exists from which images have been received and which have been refashioned to produce suggestive images that have provoked acts of understanding within the first operation of the mind. The instrumental object in the understanding which is constitutive of judgement is a reflection that thinks about the relation that connects data of sense with terms of abstractive understanding as these have been conceptualized in outer words that reveal the meaning of internal mental words. By experiencing the interactive relation which connects data, on the one hand, with principles of understanding, on the other, a rational assent now becomes possible through a second kind of intellectual emanation (or rational compulsion) which accepts the reality or rationality of a proposed truth. The ground throughout is a basis in experience. A retroactive analysis has grasped all the necessary, facilitating conditions that are needed in a prospective judgment and, by referring to the data of cognitional consciousness which are immediately available to a knower, one immediately knows if all these conditions of sense and intellect have been fulfilled. As persons are able to move from one reflective act of understanding to another, each person grows in wisdom which, in turn, is to be identified as the virtue of good judgment.³¹

In turning now to Bernard Lonergan’s notion of truth and how his notion goes beyond the understanding which had been enjoyed by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, a number of points merit mention. First, Lonergan distinguishes a “notion of being” or “notion of reality” from an idea or a concept of being or reality. Simply and baldly stated, an idea of reality refers to the term or effect of an act of understanding. If a person moves toward an understanding of being or reality and comes to understand being or reality, the term or fruit of this understanding would be an idea. It would be an inner word which has yet to be articulated. Once articulated, one would exist as a concept of being and not be just an idea of being. In any case, in this context, by having or enjoying such an idea or concept, one would have an understanding about everything which is or exists. One’s understanding would be unlimited. An unrestricted meaning implies an unrestricted act of understanding. However, no human being enjoys an unrestricted act of understanding. Only God enjoys such an act. However, if we each advert to the fact that each of us desires to enjoy unrestricted understanding, an unrestricted understanding that understands everything about everything, on the basis of this human cognitional desire, it is possible to speak about an unrestricted notion of being that each of us has as human beings. By our desire to know, by a conscious intentionality that exists in our curiosity and the questions that we would like to ask, we are immediately related to everything which exists and even to everything which could exist. By our desire to know which exists as a perfectly natural inclination that we can identify in ourselves (in the data of our conscious life), we can posit that we are immediately related to all of being or reality though this reality of being is not fully known. In other words, by a conscious striving that exists in our questioning, we are positively related to reality in an incipient manner. Our inquiry does not suppose any complete separation but that we can begin to relate to reality through acts of

³⁰*De Veritate*, q. 12, a. 3.

³¹*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 45, a. 2; cf. Ivo Coelho, *Hermeneutics and Method: The ‘Universal Viewpoint’ in Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 21.

inquiry that can lead us to questions whose answering forges more intimate bonds between who we are as potential knowers and what can be known through acts of understanding which are completed by acts of judgment.

Moving on, as had been the case with both Aristotle and Aquinas, Lonergan distinguishes between two operations of the mind. Acts of reflective understanding known as judgments succeed initial, abstractive acts of understanding which grasp meaning amid images or phantasms that refer to acts of sense and their respective contents. However, where, according to Lonergan,³² Aquinas speaks of a reduction through basic principles of the mind to acts and data of sense which trigger intelligible emanations that effect acts of judgment,³³ Lonergan speaks about acts of meaning and the difference between a hypothetical meaning and an absolute or rational meaning which is a “virtually unconditioned.”³⁴ In a human judgment which says that something exists, the existence which is posited is absolute since an affirmation of existence totally excludes any claim that would speak about non-existence or absence of existence. It is a conditioned whose conditions of existence have all been met or fulfilled. And so, since its conditions for existence have all been fulfilled, it exists as a “virtually unconditioned.” In contrast, something which exists as an absolutely unconditioned is a being or reality which has no conditions. Its existence is never contingent. It is not subject to any qualifications. A formal absolute is to be distinguished from a virtual absolute although, if conditions for a conditioned have been fulfilled, the conditioned exists as an unconditioned. In his writings Lonergan speaks about Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon River in his march on Rome.³⁵ The crossing of the Rubicon was a contingent event. Things could have been different. Caesar could have decided not to cross the river. The fact that he did cross the Rubicon is a truth, however, which can never be denied. As a truth, it is timeless. It is an eternal truth which always holds though it refers to a contingent event.

This reference to an historical event in the life of Julius Caesar accordingly points to the prevalence of concrete judgments of fact in concrete human knowing, a cognitional fact that Lonergan adverts to in his understanding of judgment. In this matter, Lonergan adheres to a thesis that had been propounded by Aquinas. Human knowing is structured in such a way that its proper object is something which presents itself to us initially by an act of sense. Proper human knowing is incarnate human knowing. The object is an insight into concrete presentations of sense or phantasms, *intelligere in sensibili*. Everything else which is known by human beings is known through analogies that work from the nature of human understanding as this nature is known through a process of self-reflection which reveals both the powers and the limits of human knowing. Hence, if human knowing is move toward an act of judgment which can affirm the reality of an intelligible relation that is first known (experienced) by an act of abstractive understanding, the means is one which works by way of a return to acts of sense. The object is

³²Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 73, p. 77, p. 150.

³³*De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 1; cf. *De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1, obj. 10.

³⁴Giovanni Sala, “Lonergan on the Virtually Unconditioned as the Ground of Judgment,” <http://www.lonergan.org/Sala/Lonergan%20on%20the%20Virtually%20Unconditioned-T2.htm>.

³⁵Bernard Lonergan, “Philosophy and Theology,” *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, eds. William F. J. Ryan, S. J. and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S. J. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), p. 193.

“the groundedness or the absolute of a contingent” that, in fact, is or exists.³⁶ One’s understanding turns back on itself to attend to objects that exist within one’s experience of one’s self who is engaged in a cognitive process. Lonergan’s understanding of judgment differs little from Aquinas’s understanding of it excepting the fact that Lonergan explicitly speaks about human consciousness and the structure of human consciousness as had not been the case with Aquinas who dealt with other concerns and questions. Aquinas did speak about one’s experience of one’s acts of sense and understanding but, in the context of his time, he refrained from engaging in a process of articulate self-reflection whose object is to speak about transitions within human consciousness that allow one to distinguish between different acts which are constitutive of one’s consciousness as move from potential human knowing, to partial knowing, and then to actual knowing. Lonergan’s analysis of judgment accordingly proposes a theory of truth that is grounded in experiences of consciousness if verifiable judgments alleging truth are to be reasonably and rationally made.

The key to this approach is an introspective form of analysis which first distinguishes three kinds of presence or object.³⁷ There is, firstly, a local, physical or ontological presence or object that exists apart from cognition (as when one experiences the presence of one’s face which cannot be directly seen by one’s eyes); secondly, a presence or object which is the term of a cognitional act (whether an act of sense or an act of reason); and thirdly, a presence or object which is the self-presence or the self-consciousness of a person who engages in certain acts and who therefore knows that he or she is engaging in certain acts and not others. While the second kind of object is not itself conscious (although it is the term of a conscious act), the third kind of object is conscious because it is a conscious act which refers to a conscious subject. By acts which are themselves conscious, a subject is itself conscious and becomes more conscious than one would otherwise be. A human being *as a subject* then ceases to be more than just a substance: a being or a person who would be existing as a subject in only a potential or in an unrealized way. A person can be sometimes less than a subject through lack of activity although, with activity, a person is identified with a subject.³⁸ Thus, through differing conscious acts which lead to each other as conditions that prepare the way for the emergence of other, later conscious acts in human cognition, a human person *as a subject* grows in consciousness of self. A person becomes more aware of who he or she is and what he or she can do as a potential knower. A subject becomes is more present to him or herself; one is more fully conscious. And so, as a result, by a heightening of consciousness which occurs through reflexive self-knowing, a person grows in detachment and balance. A person becomes more able to make good judgments.

As a person grows in subjectivity, the subjectivity of a given subject undergoes change. A person is able to do more things. A person’s horizon or outlook on life expands as it encompasses more factors. The knowing of a subject *as a subject* transforms a subject in a way which transcends the value of any knowing that is the knowing of an object only *as an object*. Admittedly, in knowing an object as an object, to some extent, a knower is changed as something which is known enters a

³⁶Sala.

³⁷Bernard Lonergan, *The Incarnate Word*, unpublished manuscript translated 1989 by Charles C. Hefling, Jr. from the original Latin of the *De Verbo Incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University Press *ad usum auditorum*, 1964), pp. 179-182.

³⁸Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 190; p. 198.

knower's consciousness (one's acts of sensing and one's acts of understanding).³⁹ However, by attending to the inner experience of one's own consciousness, the psychological reality of one's subjectivity manifests itself in a way which helps to train one's cognition, one's ability to know. With every growth in self-knowledge, with every little advance, a true and more exact knowledge of other things becomes more probable. Self-knowledge is crucial. It serves as a basis or foundation from which one moves to other things.

From a standpoint that is grounded in an explicit thematization of all the acts that are constitutive of human consciousness, the self-reflection that, at times, had been referred to by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas now becomes a systematic which more exactly distinguishes between the intellectual consciousness of acts of understanding from the consciousness that belongs to acts of sense. Instead of immediately turning to an extroverted act of sense for evidence which can be used to say that something is true or real, one turns instead to the data that exists within one's conscious life and one compares and attends to the different elements that one finds within it. If, for instance, through self-knowledge, one knows that acts of understanding occur within sense and that they are triggered by apt images adapted from sense, one knows that acts of understanding transcend sense even as they are never severed from a relation with sense. In other words, as the self-reflection of judgment tries to move toward a knowledge of truth and being, it realizes that all knowledge of reality is mediated by intelligibility and not by sensibility. Oddly enough, in judgment, sensibility is approached through intelligibility and its constitutive principles. For instance, what is contradictory is not intelligible.⁴⁰ A square circle is an unintelligible thing. One does not ask questions about it. But, if one has an insight which grasps, for instance, what is man's nature, if one has a definition which specifies a universal meaning, one has a meaning which suggests what conditions need to be fulfilled if one is to speak about existence or reality.⁴¹ In one's concept of a man, a form is inseparably joined with a material principle which refers to "common matter." One's definition, after all, is meant to apply to all instances of men. Hence, as a universally applicable definition, the material component refers to a generic species of matter, a common matter, which is understood in one's act of understanding, an act of understanding which generates a concept or definition. The common matter is not itself a datum of sense but, as matter, it suggests what kind of experience is needed in terms of a specific act of sense if one's definition is to be affirmed as a truth which truly knows a reality. An act of sense is specified which can apprehend an instance of particular matter that is distinct from common matter and which, yet, is structured in a way that is delimited by one's definition or concept of man. From an analysis of one's hypothetical meaning, an act of sense is determined if one is to proceed toward verification. This example perhaps illustrates the fact that acts of sense needed for verification may not be too obvious as one tries to move from a prospective judgment to a judgment whose term is either an affirmation or a denial. Recourse to sense is never direct or as simple as what one might initially presume.

If the above example is not a very good one for speaking about the kind of reflection which occurs

³⁹Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, pp. 183-4, p. 198; see also Bernard Lonergan, *Collection*, "Christ as Subject: A Reply," eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 165.

⁴⁰Sala.

⁴¹Sala.

in judgment, an example taken from the history of modern science might be more apt. The Italian astronomer and physicist, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was interested in the study of the free fall of falling objects.⁴² The received Aristotelian view on the free fall of falling objects said that objects fell with rates of speed that varied with weight. A heavier object fell more quickly than a lighter object. It would fall with greater acceleration. However, Galileo had doubts. He noticed that hailstones differing in weight fell to the ground at the same time. The heavier stones did not fall before the lighter. And so, he postulated that objects fell at the same speed regardless of what could be their weight. A constant acceleration was to be postulated with respect to the speed of fall. This was his insight. And, as he pondered his insight, he realized that, if he were to affirm his theory as a truth or fact, he would need to find a way to measure the speeds of falling objects in intervals of time. In order to take accurate measurements, he needed to construct inclined planes that would slow the falling, downward speed of a moving object and also find a way to measure shorter intervals of time, a problem that he resolved by using half-second musical beats. By these means he was able to generate a set of measurements which proved that, as one creates conditions that approximate a vacuum, it can be affirmed that all falling objects in and about the earth's surface fall at a speed which is a constant acceleration. As every second passes, a dropped object falls to earth with an ever increasing velocity, a velocity which has been determined to be 32 feet per second per second. Since the discovery of Galileo's law for the free fall of falling objects, other laws have been found in the study of matter in motion as the particular subject matter in physics and, with the discovery of each new law, Galileo's law has been verified in a cumulative way.

In conclusion then in our look at Lonergan's notion of truth, since every reflective judgment elicits an affirmation or a denial that is grounded on specific, limited presentations of intellect and sense, it cannot be said in general that truth is to be understood as a purely relative commodity. Truth cannot be regarded as if it were a species of myth. In the context of a prospective judgment, an unlimited number of conditions do not have to be identified. A knowledge of one part or thing in the world does not imply or require that everything else be known. Every act of human understanding which ends in a judgment is limited by the incremental character of human knowing. However, this gradualness is no denial of advances in human knowing which occur over time.

⁴²Stillman Drake, *Galileo* (Reading: Cox and Wyman Limited, 1980), p. 22.