

## Faith and Feeling in Lonergan

Christopher Friel

---

**Abstract:** *I give an interpretation of Lonergan's claim that values are apprehended in feelings. I situate his project within fundamental theology rather than in foundations for ethics arguing that Lonergan was concerned to give an ecumenically conceived apologetic in order to conceive the "leap" of faith. To this end I show how the later work was informed by the 1952 Analysis of Faith. I show how Lonergan drew creatively on his sources: on Scheler he takes up Pascal's "the heart has its reasons" (now in the context of the value of believing) and on Hildebrand he takes up the self-transcendence of the value-response. I offer a new perspective on the emotional element of intentionality in Lonergan and suggest that fears of anti-intellectualism stem from a concern to situate his emotional phenomenology primarily within ethics.*

---

**Key Words:** Lonergan, Scheler, Hildebrand, faith, feeling

---

In order to show the reasonableness of faith, theologians have sometimes turned inwards in order to turn upwards. For example, a theologian may begin by describing a phenomenon such as the act of understanding when we make a scientific discovery or the feeling of reverence when we encounter a noble deed. The religious significance of this experience is then explained in such a way that the reader comes to appreciate that the "leap" of faith can in some sense be regarded as reasonable. This form of apologetics is attractive; it can take people as they are.

This, however, is too crude. For if such an apologetics has any chance of being effective, it cannot merely be "apologetics." Insight and the apprehension of values in feelings are intimate matters that require a delicate and sophisticated treatment. A forthright attempt to use such experiences as a hook for faith will be counter-productive. What is required from such a phenomenology is an analysis that merits a hearing from a non-theological audience. Such a phenomenology, then, will be far more than apologetics. If philosophy is to offer her services as a handmaiden to theology, she must be free to find employment elsewhere. Nevertheless, it remains that a theologian attracted to the traditional idea of philosophy (or ethics) as handmaiden may well attempt to deploy such a strategy in their "turn to the subject." In this paper it will be argued that such a strategy is well exemplified in the work of Bernard Lonergan.

To that end an interpretation of Lonergan's thought will be given regarding the claim that "values are apprehended in feelings."<sup>1</sup> The first step will be to explain the method used to interpret a claim which, as a matter of fact, provoked some controversy.

---

<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, this precise phrase never appears in the corpus, though the idea is clearly present, for example, Lonergan explains that "Such apprehensions [of value] are given in feelings," *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) 37.

This will involve two tasks. First of all some insight into the claim will be provided by highlighting the context of Lonergan's project as a whole—meaning is use. It will be argued that this claim must be understood in the light of Lonergan's endeavours to discuss the human good with a view to showing why religion is something good. Second, Lonergan's claim must be understood as arising from an analysis of a structure that involves other technical meanings, for example, Lonergan speaks of the "notion of value." How does the "apprehension" connect with the "notion," for example? What are the mechanics, so to speak, of the apprehension of feelings? A model will be suggested that will indicate Lonergan's concern for "self-transcending motivation."

A second step involves examining the data for this inquiry. This will also involve two tasks. First of all, Lonergan's sources must be examined, namely, Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand.<sup>2</sup> Second, texts from Lonergan must be considered, namely, his *Method of Theology* which in turn must be illuminated by his earlier essay, "Analysis of Faith." It will emerge that Lonergan is now giving a new answer to an old question, and that his appropriation of the phenomenologists on feeling must be understood in the light of his familiar concerns on faith.

Finally, a third step will be to recognise that the interpretation offered here is not the only interpretation that has been given to Lonergan's thought. Indeed, it was a careful examination of a discussion of over thirty years that led to yet another reading that formed the basis for this contribution. Whilst it is not possible to do justice to the commentary (or the reasons for the further response) some suggestions will be made as to what might be going forward in such a conversation. Here it is worth noting that an admirer of the early Lonergan, John Finnis, found fault with the later Lonergan for claiming that values are apprehended in feelings.<sup>3</sup> The contribution offered here, seeing Lonergan's phenomenology of the emotional subject as ancillary to theology, may help to obviate some difficulties with Lonergan's alleged subjectivism.

## METHODOLOGICAL NOTE: LONERGAN'S CONTEXT

Before turning to the text, a methodological note can be given regarding context. "Context," can be spoken of in many ways. In the first task mentioned in the introduction it was pointed out that "meaning is use." It was pointed out that Lonergan's project as a whole must be born in mind. In some sense this project was apologetic; philosophy (that is, ethics) is made to serve religious purposes. This can be regarded as the function, or final cause of Lonergan's text. In other words, the context for the claim that "values are apprehended in feelings" is to be found in Lonergan's concern to show the value of believing. Moreover, this context can be revealed in more than one way. The context may be synchronic or diachronic. The synchronic context involves the way Lonergan's text is situated within a sequence of other texts at any given time. For example, the claim that

---

<sup>2</sup> Although Lonergan never references Scheler's *Formalism*, the key text is surely the section "Feeling and Feeling States" in Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1973) 253-264. Lonergan actually refers to Max Scheler, *Vom Ewigen in Menschen* (Bern: Francke, 1954) in Bernard Lonergan, *Early Works in Theological Method 1* (Toronto: UTP, 2010) 134, but that text does not discuss the apprehension of values in feelings. From 1968 Lonergan draws on Hildebrand's *Christian Ethics* (New York: MacKay 1953), especially the chapter on "Value Response."

<sup>3</sup> John Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington, DC: University of Georgetown, 1983) 32, 42-45.

values are apprehended in feelings occurs in the fourth section of a chapter that comes immediately after a third (on “The Notion of Value”) and immediately before a fifth on “Beliefs,” or again, that same chapter (on “The Human Good”) is deliberately positioned before a later chapter (on “Religion”).<sup>4</sup> Although it cannot always be argued that what is presented previously is for the sake of what is presented subsequently, at times this is obviously the case. Generally speaking the synchronic context is reasonably well signposted. The diachronic context involves the way that a sequence of parallels is found in Lonergan’s text developed over the years at different times. Like Aquinas, Lonergan wrote and rewrote, and examining repeated treatments of the same topic (parallels, “doublets”) often affords insight. For example, Lonergan’s treatment of beliefs in *Method* parallels a digression on belief in *Insight*, which in turn draws on work that will remain unpublished for over forty years. By examining texts in this context it is hoped that the various purposes in writing will emerge.

As will become clear, Lonergan drew on both Scheler and Hildebrand for the idea that values are apprehended in feelings, but both thinkers had their own distinctive concerns, and neither was quite concerned with what Lonergan was. For example, Scheler will draw on Pascal’s dictum that “the heart has reasons that the reasons does not know” in the context of the history of ethics (rebutting Kant’s formalism)<sup>5</sup> whereas in Lonergan the dictum occurs within the context of a discussion of religious faith.<sup>6</sup> To repeat, in interpreting Lonergan’s text, his own distinctive religious concerns must be born in mind, and an examination of context is helpful in this regard.

A second task involved in understanding what Lonergan means by “apprehending values in feelings” concerns what might be called the structure of such an act. If the first task concerns the final cause, the second concerns the formal. Metaphorically, the first task is akin to explaining the “meaning” of the mainspring in terms of the human practice of keeping time; the second task concerns the way that the mainspring is connected to the balance wheel, and all the other parts of the clock. That is to say, interpreting Lonergan involves explaining how value-apprehension emerges within the structure of other acts. The problem is, so to speak, that Lonergan has constructed a machine that has been assembled by taking parts from Scheler, parts from Hildebrand, and has put them together in his own unique way. Just how these parts fit together has provided matter for discussion. For example, does the “apprehension of values” involve an insight? Some commentators have thought that it must, although on one occasion Lonergan rebutted the idea.

To appreciate the problem, Lonergan’s very coherent teaching on the act termed “insight” can be recalled. Not, that is, the object of insight (what the act of understanding is about, the intelligible unity or relation that is grasped within images) but how the act is conditioned by other acts—the structuration of insight. Thus, insight can be thought of as the fourth of five steps. If in the first place, some datum is present (say a cartwheel) then, in the second place, a wondering may arise as to why the wheel is round, so that in the third place, a schematic image may be formed such as in a diagram used by a teacher of

---

<sup>4</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 25: “[B]efore we can speak of religion, we first must say something about the human good.”

<sup>5</sup> Scheler, *Formalism* 253-64.

<sup>6</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*.

mathematics whereby what is to be understood becomes more manifest so that in the fourth place the act of understanding (the insight) emerges, and because it does, in the fifth place, a definition can be formed by bringing into unity all that was relevant or essential in the diagram with the intelligibility grasped by the insight. Slightly confusingly, Lonergan sometimes spoke of this structure as the “context” of insight—the context of insight, then, is the mechanics of this five step process; it is concerned with the question of how that act is conditioned and conditions other acts.<sup>7</sup> Lonergan also spoke of the content of insight. This regards what it is that is grasped by insight, in general, a relation, a unity or some necessity in the datum (grasping the necessary and sufficient conditions for circularity, say).

Lonergan, then, carefully and patiently articulated the context of insight in this sense. Although appropriating Lonergan’s thought as regards the intelligent subject requires diligence, it does not appear to provoke controversy as does the issue of what he meant in claiming that values are apprehended in feelings. For example, how does the “apprehension of values in feelings” fit with the sequence of “deliberation, evaluation, decision, and deed” that Lonergan frequently recited? This, problem is an instance what is meant by speaking of interpreting Lonergan’s claim in the third sense of “context.” What was Lonergan’s model in this respect?

Here it is suggested that it will be helpful to think of four interlocked terms—object, motive, self-transcendence, and value. Lonergan’s intention is to envisage a scheme that is open to two distinct cases, firstly, when the object is known (that is, apprehended) and secondly, when the object is not known. The first case provides an analogue for the second. In the first, case, then, when an object is apprehended by a motivation that is self-transcending, then that object is constituted as a value. In some sense this is the “normal” case. But Lonergan envisages a case in which an intentional response is made to an object that is unknown in the sense of not apprehended. What is “known” in a peculiar sense is self-transcending motivation, for this experience is conscious. Insofar as one is aware that such motivation is self-transcending, to that extent one is aware that one is motivated by value. Lonergan’s point is to consider a response to ultimate value, for example, of those who do not have explicit faith. This understanding of Lonergan’s text—which can be called the “motivation theory”—is offered as a way of interpreting Lonergan as providing device for an ecumenically conceived apologetic.

Having provided a lens, then, for reading Lonergan, attention can turn to the phenomenologists on whom Lonergan drew.

## LONERGAN’S SOURCES

The later Lonergan sometimes advised questioners to “go to Scheler” and he spoke of Hildebrand as having a “wealth of insights.”<sup>8</sup> Regarding the phenomenology of the emotional subject, the key text for Scheler’s model (which Lonergan does not reference) is from a section of his *Formalism in Ethics* entitled “Feeling and Feeling States.”<sup>9</sup> This model

---

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974) 269.

<sup>8</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 31 n.2.

<sup>9</sup> Scheler, *Formalism* 253-264.

will be both developed and criticised in Hildebrand's *Christian Ethics*<sup>10</sup> in ways that Lonergan notes.<sup>11</sup> Both phenomenologists will speak of feelings as intentional, indeed, spiritual. Lonergan will follow them in this regard.<sup>12</sup> However, the phenomenologists disagree on at least two points: on the "heart's reasons" and on the motivation of the value response. Scheler will side with Pascal in claiming that the heart has reasons that the reason does not know, and resist a more intellectualist reading (favoured by Hildebrand) that will speak in terms of an intellectual perception of values. Hildebrand, however, insists on the self-transcending motivation in the value response—the merely subjectively satisfying are not, as Scheler thinks, to be regarded as values. Lonergan will side with Scheler in following Pascal in believing that the heart does have reasons that the reason does not know rather than with Hildebrand's intellectualism, but he will agree that values in the sense that Hildebrand considers them truly result from self-transcending motivation: goods that are merely subjectively satisfying are not regarded as values either by Hildebrand or Lonergan.

## MAX SCHELER ON INTENTIONAL FEELING

Scheler's purpose is to counter Kant's formalism in ethics. He agrees with Kant that ethics must attain the a priori whereby values are apprehended as absolute—Scheler speaks of a "pure" intuition—and so he rejects an ethics of goods and purposes. Scheler promotes instead, a "material" ethics; he rejects the formalism that consists merely in the grasp rational principles that we should do our duty, for example. Thus, values can be "ontic"; the people we love can be apprehended as values according to Scheler. To this end he will explain how we can have access to this realm of values. This is in virtue of an emotional a priori, and for this reason Scheler draws attention to a distinction within our feelings.

Feelings, then, or feeling-acts (*Fühlen*) must not be confused with feeling-states (*Gefühle, Gefühlszuständen*).<sup>13</sup> It is in the former category that Scheler discovers the intentional element in our affectivity; here there is an "original act" that provides access to the realm of values.<sup>14</sup> Scheler contrasts the originality of such acts with the mediated (or derived) nature of feeling states that may merely be a function of our sensibility. Feeling states are not regarded as spiritual but feeling acts are. Thus Pascal is vindicated for in virtue of such acts the heart truly has its reasons: we come to apprehend an objective realm of values.<sup>15</sup>

Scheler makes a point which is more convincing in German: we can "feel a feeling."<sup>16</sup> In English the word "feeling" is used in two different ways. Feeling can refer to the state of feeling, or the feeling of this state. The German, however, has two different terms for states and feelings respectively. The noun, *das Gefühl*, can refer to sensation or sentiment; it can be used in constructions to give a sense of "collywobbles," a gut feeling, a sinking feeling.

---

<sup>10</sup> Hildebrand, *Christian Ethics*.

<sup>11</sup> Lonergan refers to "that distinction ... added by von Hildebrand" in Bernard Lonergan, *Early Works in Theological Method I* 505.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 602.

<sup>13</sup> Scheler *Formalism* 255.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 256.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 255.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 256.

Fühlen is used verbally, to feel good, to feel something, to sense something. To render his idea in English it could be said that Scheler is pointing out that we can take an attitude to our feelings, where the action of doing so involves intentionality.

Scheler claims that the difference between the two becomes evident in cases where the feeling act and the feeling state coincide. He considers the same (indubitably sensible) feeling-state as felt in differing ways. He uses the example of pain. I can suffer, endure, tolerate, or even enjoy pain.<sup>17</sup> “Pain observed is almost the opposite of pain suffered.” Feeling states may have causes, or arise in being associated with other states, but for Scheler this indicates that they are derived or mediated. With feeling acts, however, there is “an original relatedness, a directedness of something objective, namely values.”<sup>18</sup>

Scheler’s idea is that such feeling acts are intrinsically related to values.<sup>19</sup> Such acts cannot be reduced to states.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, they may emerge despite a lack of pictorial objects.<sup>21</sup> They are related to values in a way analogous to the way to the mind grasps truths—for feeling acts may be “understandable” rather than being explicable merely in terms of causal explanation.<sup>22</sup> Values make a claim on our feelings, demanding a response, which is, so to speak, the function of such feelings, a function that will fail if our feelings do not measure up to the value in question.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, such feelings do not create the values in question (which can be neither created nor destroyed); rather, such feelings reveal values. For Scheler values are neither produced by feeling states, nor do they consist in such states. Moreover, we can be mistaken about values, for our scale of values may be distorted—Scheler has elsewhere explored Nietzsche’s idea of resentment, the sour grapes whereby the weaker party comes to reject the values of the stronger with whom they clash.

Such, briefly, is the intentional element of our activity which Scheler will continue to explore in the phenomenon of preferring, and also loving. By such an account he will vindicate Pascal against two errors in philosophy. On the one hand there are those such as Spinoza, Descartes and Leibniz who recognised intentional feeling as a confused grasp of truth, but on the other hand there are those who reduce feeling to sensation, akin to a “pain in the stomach.” Scheler seeks to describe a phenomenon that is both truly revelatory, and truly emotional. Pascal must not be taken ironically: the heart truly does have its reasons, and these are not simply those that the reason already knows.<sup>24</sup>

## DIETRICH VON HILDEBRAND ON VALUE RESPONSE

Although Lonergan appears to have a clear awareness of Scheler’s contribution with which he was familiar from at least the 1950s, it seems as though he only incorporated the idea of apprehending values in feelings in his later work as a result of reading Hildebrand, as evidenced by references in his lectures dating from 1968. Lonergan appropriates

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 256.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 257.

<sup>19</sup> Feelings are “not externally” brought together with an object. Ibid. 258.

<sup>20</sup> The feeling act is a “punctual movement”. Ibid. 258.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 259.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 258 n.24.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 259.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 262.

Hildebrand's use of the term "response," for example; the chapter of his *Ethics* from which Lonergan draws is entitled "Value Response." Lonergan points out that Hildebrand distinguishes "non-intentional states such as fatigue, irritability, bad humour, anxiety" and trends such as "hunger, thirst, and sexual discomfort" on the one hand, from "intentional responses that ... answer to what is intended, apprehended, represented."<sup>25</sup> Although Lonergan does not misrepresent Hildebrand, it might be worth noting that the precise phrase, "intentional response"<sup>26</sup> in connection with feelings occurs only once in the *Ethics* as does the phrase "apprehension of values."<sup>27</sup>

Generally speaking, the word "response" points to a difference between Hildebrand and Scheler. Hildebrand is particularly concerned to refute the relativism implicit in, say, Ayer's emotivism, and he speaks of a perception of values. This appears to be an intellectual perception, although Hildebrand is not quite clear on the matter. Again, he insists on the rule that *nihil volitum nisi cogitatum*.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the heart has its reasons that the reason first of all knows. Some intellectual perception is necessary if values are apprehended.

Nevertheless, such intellectual grasp is not sufficient—and this points to the second difference between the two phenomenologists. The key insight of Hildebrand's career emerged, in connection with motivation, outside a grocer's shop in Vienna. Hildebrand was completing his doctorate under Husserl in 1911, and noted the way his girlfriend was eyeing the goods in the shop window. This is clearly explained by his wife, Alice: It suddenly occurred to him that their appeal differed radically from the appeal of values. In a flash, he discerned that whereas the appetising wares derived their importance from the viewer's response to their appeal, the importance of values was intrinsic to their very being. Their importance was rooted in their essence, independently of any response given to them.

Values called for a proper response of appreciation. They deserved this response, while the response given to tempting foods was up to the individual. In other words, Dietrich discovered that there are two radically different categories of importance, two very different forms of motivation. The first he called value (that is, the important in itself), and the other the merely subjectively satisfying (that is, something whose importance is derived exclusively from the appeal it has for an individual person). To clarify this difference, we might say that gratitude is the response due to the value of a generous action, something intrinsically good in itself, whereas the importance that beer has for a person depends exclusively on whether or not he happens to like it.<sup>29</sup>

The significance of this category of importance, namely, motivation, is foundational for the way Hildebrand will draw the distinction between satisfactions and values pace Scheler.<sup>30</sup> As he explains in the third chapter of the *Ethics*, a good can appeal to two distinct centres. This is evident when we are pulled in two opposing directions by desires that cannot concretely be satisfied at the same time. We wish to attend to an amusing social affair, but our friend needs our moral support. In such a situation, it is not a matter

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 262.

<sup>26</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics* 121.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 364. Hildebrand's example of gentleness is also used by Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965-1980* (Toronto: UTP, 2004) 27-29.

<sup>28</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics* 28, 197.

<sup>29</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, *Soul of a Lion* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000) 115-116.

<sup>30</sup> Hildebrand, *Ethics* 40.

simply of a higher value in conflict with a lower value (as Hildebrand reads Scheler) but of temptation. The issue is not simply a matter of what we love, but why we love it. Ultimately, Hildebrand will consider the heart in Augustinian terms, as drawn either to the City of God, or to the earthly city. He will offer a phenomenology of the way in which values make their appeal. Decisive marks of the value response include self-abandonment, respect for the good, spirituality, and the honouring of a debt to what is objectively owed. That is, the value response is properly understood as self-transcending.<sup>31</sup>

Although Lonergan never cites this third chapter, it is clear that he noted the significance of this distinction for Hildebrand, and in fact, after assimilating his thought, will always speak of moral conversion in terms of a choice between values that are self-transcending and the merely subjectively satisfying which Lonergan will sometimes characterise as self-regarding whereby the former are regularly chosen.<sup>32</sup>

### LONERGAN ON APPREHENDING VALUES IN FEELINGS

Lonergan came to adopt a distinct approach to value from March 1968. Within a couple of weeks it emerged, firstly in a talk entitled “The Subject”<sup>33</sup> which was complemented by a talk entitled “Horizons.”<sup>34</sup> These lectures can be thought of as containing within them a “call and response” that parallels matters discussed by the two phenomenologists. They introduce themes that are subsequently always paired by Lonergan. In *Method in Theology*, for example, the second chapter on “The Human Good” has a third section entitled “The Notion of Value”<sup>35</sup> while the fourth section (entitled “Judgments of Value”) contains Lonergan’s controversial comments on the apprehensions of value given in feelings.<sup>36</sup> For Lonergan, the notion of value is introduced by way of a call, as it were, indicating our capacity for self-transcendence. Apprehensions of value in feelings can be thought of as a partial response to this capacity, a full capacity being God’s gift of God’s love that he will treat in a later chapter.<sup>37</sup>

The idea of the “notion” of value represents a development of the “notion of being” of the early thought.<sup>38</sup> Here, “notion” is a technical term. It is a “transcendental,” that is, it is “comprehensive in denotation, unrestricted in denotation, invariant in cultural change.”<sup>39</sup> Lonergan here implies that although such transcendentals are universal, they are not to be thought of as abstract. The comparison is with Aristotle’s wonder; in the case of the notion of value this is expressed in the question: is it really worthwhile? In such questioning responsibility arises, so that consciousness is promoted to a new level, conscience. Lonergan was clear that conscience was to be regarded in this intellectual

---

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 34-9.

<sup>32</sup> Lonergan, *Method* 240.

<sup>33</sup> Lonergan, *Second Collection* 69-86.

<sup>34</sup> Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological* 10-29.

<sup>35</sup> Lonergan, *Method* 34.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 37-8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 105

<sup>38</sup> For an exposition see Christopher Friel, “Lonergan’s Notion of Being” to appear *Heythrop Journal*.

<sup>39</sup> Lonergan, *Method* 10.

context (the source of questions), though, of course, it might be felt as unhappy, peaceful, and so on.<sup>40</sup>

Lonergan speaks of such notions as a priori.<sup>41</sup> That is, they precede answers. The notions set a standard. For example, if we think we see water in the desert, and we inquire as to whether what we see is water, it is no answer to be told that what we see certainly looks like water. If an answer is to meet a question it must share the meaning of that question, and the meaning of this question goes beyond the way that water appears to us. Thus, if ever a correct answer is obtained, we certainly know whether it is water that we see, for that is what our question intended. Similarly, the notion of value underpins questions that intend what is truly good so that if such an exigence is met, then that is what will be attained. The notion of value in this sense is of distinctly Lonerganian provenance, and represents the a priori that Scheler attributed to “intentional functions of feeling” and Hildebrand to the “perception of values.”

When he first introduced the idea of the “notion of value” Lonergan conceded that it might seem “nebulous.”<sup>42</sup> He alludes to the question-begging of Aristotle who claimed that actions are called just and temperate as they are performed as the just and temperate perform them or virtuous as the wise person determines them. Lonergan’s point, essentially, is that Aristotle simply assumes that such good, self-transcending people exist. Here, so to speak, we have foundations for ethics; here, in fact, we have reached bedrock. Assuming that such people exist we can reflect on the principle of such virtuous living, and so Lonergan refers to the “notion or the intention of the good [which] functions within one’s human acting.”<sup>43</sup> By reflecting on such functioning one comes to know what the good is. We understand better the call, so to speak, by observing the response.

Two weeks later in “Horizons,” Lonergan fleshes out his idea to incorporate not only the good within one’s acting, but within one’s feeling, and in this context speaks of apprehending values in feelings, where such feelings are the “intentional responses” that have been described by the phenomenologists. Lonergan’s explanation is incorporated into the section of *Method in Theology* that follows that on the “Notion of Value”:

Intermediate between judgments of fact and judgments of value lie apprehensions of value. Such apprehensions are given in feelings. The feelings in question are not the already described non-intentional states, trends, urges, that are related to efficient and final causes but not to objects. Again, they are not intentional responses to such objects as the agreeable or disagreeable, the pleasant or painful, the satisfying or dissatisfying. For, while these are objects, still they are ambiguous objects that may prove to be truly good or bad or only apparently good or bad. Apprehensions of value occur in a further category of intentional response which greets either the ontic value of a person or the qualitative value of beauty, of understanding, of truth, of noble deeds, of virtuous acts, of great achievements. For we are so endowed that we not only ask questions leading to self-transcendence, not only can recognize correct answers constitutive of intentional

---

<sup>40</sup> Conscience is first raised in connection with the notion of value; see *Ibid.* 35. That conscience is based on intelligence, see Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological* 28.

<sup>41</sup> Lonergan, *Method* 11.

<sup>42</sup> Lonergan, *Second Collection* 82.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 82.

self-transcendence, but also respond with the stirring of our very being when we glimpse the possibility or the actuality of moral self-transcendence.<sup>44</sup>

Lonergan continues to explain judgments of value (the title of the section), and introduces the theme of their development and ominously, their aberration—we fail to develop, and we may even come to “hate the truly good, and love the really evil.” In this context Lonergan draws on the distinction of Joseph de Finance between horizontal and vertical liberty. The former involves the exercise of liberty within a determinate horizon; the latter is the exercise of liberty that selects that horizon:

Such vertical liberty may be implicit: it occurs in responding to the motives that lead one to ever fuller authenticity, or in ignoring such motives and drifting into an ever less authentic selfhood. But it also can be explicit. Then one is responding to the transcendental notion of value, by determining what it would be worthwhile for one to make of oneself, and what it would be worthwhile for one to do for one’s fellow men ... In such vertical liberty, whether implicit or explicit, are to be found the foundations of the judgments of value that occur. Such judgments are felt to be true or false in so far as they generate a peaceful or uneasy conscience ... It is by the transcendental notion of value and its expression in a good and an uneasy conscience that man can develop morally. But a rounded moral judgment is ever the work of a fully developed self-transcending subject or, as Aristotle would put it, of a virtuous man.<sup>45</sup>

Whenever he discusses vertical liberty, Lonergan always continues by developing the theme of the fifth section on “Beliefs.” This is followed by a section outlining the structure of the human good, and a final section with which the theme is always linked, namely redemption.<sup>46</sup>

Now, Lonergan’s treatment of beliefs was not without precedent. He had discussed the “mechanics” of the steps to belief in *Insight*. There, incidentally, Lonergan had only ever considered judgements of value in the context of the value of believing. This discussion was in turn informed by a work of 1952 delivered to students as a treatise on which Lonergan had worked for over twenty years in which Lonergan had grappled with various issues pertaining to Catholic theology in the wake of Vatican I.

## LONERGAN ON THE ANALYSIS OF FAITH

Lonergan’s “Analysis of Faith” has only recently been published in the *Collected Works*.<sup>47</sup> In it he makes his contribution to the scholastic treatise that deals with what Kleutgen referred to as the “cross” of the theologian.<sup>48</sup> To simplify greatly, the Catholic wishes to affirm both the reasonableness of faith, and at the same time, the supernaturalness of the divine gift. How are we to find a created analogy that will give some imperfect yet fruitful understanding of this leap? Lonergan’s solution has some affinity with Rousselot’s, though he criticises Rousselot’s “eyes of faith” seeing it as failing to mark clearly the distinction

---

<sup>44</sup> Lonergan, *Method* 37-8. Lonergan references J. de Finance, *Essai sur l’agir humain* (Rome: Presses de l’Université Grégorienne, 1962) 287ff.

<sup>45</sup> Lonergan, *Method* 40-41.

<sup>46</sup> See Christopher Friel, “The Evolution of Lonergan’s Structure of The Human Good,” *Heythrop Journal* 54/5 (2013): 756-766.

<sup>47</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Early Latin Theology* (Toronto: UTP, 2011) 413-82.

<sup>48</sup> Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: OUP, 1994) 90.

between understanding and judgement—for Lonergan, judgement is a matter of positing a synthesis of concepts: it is this that corresponds to the “yes, it truly is so.”<sup>49</sup> Here Lonergan speaks of the key act (the entry point of grace) in terms of Newman’s illative sense understood as the reflective act of understanding. Lonergan is concerned with how children and the unlearned could reasonably make a rational commitment to the truth of Christianity without the benefit of what Gardeil had called “scientific faith.” In the same vein, Rousselot had asked whether there are four or five people in the whole church who have valid reasons for believing.<sup>50</sup>

Lonergan makes a distinction between the evidence (for the divine origins of Christianity, say) and a grasp of the sufficiency of such evidence.<sup>51</sup> He relates grasp of the sufficiency of the evidence to the evidence as form to matter or principal to instrument. Evidence, so to speak, is a tool for saying, “Yes” in the hands of a good artisan. Much evidence is of no avail unless it is sufficient, and even scanty and scattered evidence suffices—if it does—so long as the sufficiency is grasped, and by a certain rational necessity engenders a judgment. Even children can grasp that there is sufficient evidence for reasonably eliciting an act of faith. This comes through God’s grace. Thus people of diverse intellectual abilities, in possession of diverse degrees of evidence, all come to make an assent to faith in virtue of an act of judgement (grasping the sufficiency of the evidence) that is a gift from God.

We do need evidence, and the “clear, evident, almost palpable” signs such as “miracles, prophecies, and the sign raised aloft among the nations” (the Church). Less palpable, and dependent on each person’s measure of wisdom, is their ability to judge the “loftiness of the doctrine.”<sup>52</sup>

Lonergan’s point might be summed up with the following metaphor. God’s dealings with the person on the way to faith are like Michelangelo creating a masterpiece; the rational evidence for faith is like the chisel. The artist needs a chisel, and there are three cases: the chisel is quite unfit for purpose; the chisel is at least serviceable; the chisel is very good. A masterpiece can be created in the second and third cases. If evidence is not collected, organized, weighed and measured as sufficient for judgement, no judgement in favor of faith will be made. The chisel is faulty. But in the second case, the uneducated (or immature, inexperienced and so on) have only scanty and scattered evidence (the little that has been gathered has not been organized well) but nevertheless it is sufficiently weighty to make the judgement required. In the third case, those in possession of a sound fundamental theology can not only believe, but also, answer objections. Thus, evidence is necessary for the rational judgement in coming to faith, but like chisels, this may come in various shapes and sizes.

Lonergan then has a model for the act of faith in the sense that he can situate the act within an environment of other acts. To simplify, Lonergan’s account in *Insight* (written around the same time as the “Analysis of Faith”) can be referenced. In particular, we can note five steps. First there are preliminary judgments on the value of belief in general, on

---

<sup>49</sup> Lonergan, *Early Latin* 477.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 475.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 461.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 461.

the reliability of the source for this belief, and on the accuracy of the communication from the source; second, there is the key act, a reflective act of understanding that, in virtue of the preliminary judgments, grasps as unconditioned the value of deciding to believe some particular proposition; third, the consequent judgment of value; fourth, the consequent decision of the will; fifth, the assent that is the act of believing.<sup>53</sup>

Although a full discussion cannot be undertaken, we may note that these ideas, worked at for many years, and pertaining to matters at the heart of Lonergan's critical realism, are roughly paralleled in a five step account in *Method*. It is astonishing to note, however, that this account in *Method* does not mention what Lonergan previously referred to as the pivotal act, namely the reflective act of understanding. Lonergan no longer speaks of the "reflective act of understanding"!

In *Method* the first step in coming to believe is not really an act performed by the subject but rather the fact that truth is not private but public, detachable and communicable.<sup>54</sup> A second step is the general judgment of value that approves of man's division of labour in its historical and social dimensions. A third step is the particular judgment of value. It regards the trustworthiness of a witness, a source, a report, the competence of an expert, the soundness of judgment of a teacher, a counsellor, a leader, a statesman, an authority. A fourth step is the decision to believe that follows on the general and particular judgments of value. A fifth step is coming to believe, the act of believing; I judge to be true the communicated judgement of fact or value.

This account does not negate the reflective act of understanding, for in the third step, critical questions are posed. Moreover, there is no explicit reference to the apprehension of values in feelings. However, it is tempting to think of such an apprehension as "sublating" the reflective act of understanding. Lonergan never actually makes this point, but there is much evidence to recommend the idea.

It can be recalled that *Method's* second chapter on "The Human Good" must be understood as anticipating the fourth, on "Religion." There Lonergan will explicitly advert to Pascal's heart that has its reasons. For example, in reference to God's gift of his love: "Next, the eye of this love reveals values in their splendor, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion."<sup>55</sup> Lonergan, incidentally, did once speak of knowing values: "There is, then, a knowledge that is born of love. It is a knowledge of values and disvalues, of good and evil. It is a knowledge that consists in one's response to the values and disvalues and, more specifically, in the development, strength, fullness, refinement of one's responding."<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: UTP, 1992) 728-35.

<sup>54</sup> Lonergan, *Method* 44-7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 243.

<sup>56</sup> Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological* 43, emphases added. The phrase, "knowledge of value(s)" never occurs in *Method*, however. It is possible that by 1972 Lonergan regarded such so-called knowledge of values as knowledge in an improper sense: that by the apprehension of values/faith we are strictly speaking merely conscious of values/ultimate value.

Further indications may be explored by considering Lonergan's treatment of "consolation without cause," his ecumenical concerns inspired by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, his use of Stewart's "transcendental feeling," the technical term that he deployed frequently, namely, "a world motivated by values," his revisiting of fundamental theology, and the way he speaks of the felt experience of self-transcendence.

Limitations of space forbid further exploration, but perhaps the idea might be communicated simply by a comment from late text. In "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness" Lonergan explains: "On affectivity rests the apprehension of values. On the apprehension of values rests belief."<sup>57</sup>

## THE MOTIVATION MODEL FOR THE APPREHENSION OF VALUES IN FEELING

Up to this point an effort has been made to recover the meaning of the "apprehension of values" in the context of Lonergan's project as a whole. As was noted, the word "context" however can also refer to the way one act is conditioned by another. What, then, is the "environment" of the apprehension of values in feelings? In the methodological note the motivation theory was previewed. How are we to understand the claim that values are apprehended in feelings?

Following Scheler it seems as though our apprehensions of value are certainly not constituted by feeling states. They are, however conditioned by what Lonergan calls the "notion of value." For this reason such apprehensions are spiritual. It could be said that we apprehend values in feelings where "in" connotes "by" that is, "through the efficacy of," with such feelings "responding" to the "call" of the notion of value.

Properly speaking, and following Hildebrand, such intentional feelings do not merely reveal what we like. Insofar as our consciousness is "self-transcending," values are revealed to us. Here, motivation is significant. Why do we feel as we do? The early Lonergan was to explain that "the will is such that it not only desires good ordered in an intelligible way but also desires it because of the principle of that order, that is, the end—in other words, it desires value."<sup>58</sup> In this text, it seems, the motivation for the value response must be because of some rational principle which is presumably known. Indeed, the early Lonergan can certainly agree with Hildebrand that nothing is loved unless it is first known. In some sense, it seems, if we are to desire an object in such a way that our response is a value response then this is because we rationally choose an appropriate end. The later Lonergan, however, will insist on an exception to this rule. It was to accommodate such an understanding of Lonergan's later theology that the "motivation model" was articulated:

The apprehension of value that is given in feelings may well be to a known object, or for the sake of an end that it apprehended intellectually, but Lonergan is keen to open up a space whereby the end is not known, and the object (a symbol, perhaps) may not be proportionate to a value. For example, someone might respond to the serenity of the face

---

<sup>57</sup> Lonergan, *Third Collection* 181.

<sup>58</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* (Toronto: UTP, 2007) 675.

of a statue of Buddha. Or perhaps, for “no” reason, it is as if the room is suddenly filled with light or music.

Here we are conscious of values if our motivation is self-transcending. For Lonergan, consciousness is a matter of self-awareness rather than perception. Our acts are present to ourselves, not simply as the window is in front of us, or a new concept is formed by us, but in the way, say, we are conscious that we are about to sneeze. Of course, that consciousness is not a matter of self-transcending motivation, but assuming that we are responding “with the stirring of our very being when we glimpse the possibility or the actuality of moral self-transcendence” then such an experience can be the apprehension of values in feelings about which Lonergan wishes to speak. This corresponds to St. Ignatius’ consolation without cause that Lonergan, following Karl Rahner understands as involving content without being directed to an object. Lonergan appropriates this so as to fashion an ecumenically conceived apologetics, without, however, retracting the dogmatic realism that he also affirms. By speaking of motivation in a way that refrains from making metaphysical commitments regarding ends (this is “the turn to the subject”) Lonergan is able to give a “soft” apologetics that can take people as they are so as to live at the level of the times. Lonergan’s turn to the subject is a “turn to the vertical.”

This, theory, the “motivation model,” is presented in order to do justice to the entirety of the texts in Lonergan’s corpus. It involves the relation between the notion and the apprehension of values, intentional feelings, and self-transcending motivation. It envisages distinct cases where ends (or perhaps objects) may or may not be known.

## LONERGAN’S COMMENTATOR’S ON THE APPREHENSION OF VALUES

In this paper a perspective has been taken on how we are to understand the claim that values are to be apprehended in feelings. Several other perspectives, however, have arisen in the commentary that has opened up during the last thirty years and these deserve to be acknowledged. This, perhaps, is not too surprising for in this paper just one strand of a rich presentation has been developed. By no means can Lonergan’s thought be reduced to apologetics.

Although a full discussion cannot be undertaken, the following generalisation seems valid. Lonergan’s commentators have been concerned to address what might be regarded as the anti-intellectualism of the late thought. In 1982 John Finnis (who was concerned with the foundations of ethics) criticised Lonergan’s position. Although Finnis greatly admired the early thought, the later Lonergan appears to have joined the emotivists. Finnis retrieves a maxim from Aristotle that Hildebrand would have approved of, “we desire something because it seems good to us; it’s not that it seems good to us because we desire it.”<sup>59</sup> Lonergan seems to have got things the wrong way round.

---

<sup>59</sup> Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics* 44. The reference is *Metaphysics* XII, 7:1072a 29-30. For two responses see Neil Ormerod, “Lonergan and Finnis on the Human Good,” ed. William Danaher, *Australian Lonergan Workshop* (Lanham MD: University of America, 1993) 199-210; and Fred Lawrence, “Lonergan and Aquinas: The Postmodern Problematic of Theology and Ethics,” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University, 2002) 437-456.

Such criticism may have acted as a spur, for this precise point is not addressed in the earlier commentary of Crowe (1980).<sup>60</sup> As a result, closer attention was given to Lonergan's phrase, and Tyrrell (1988)<sup>61</sup> turned to Lonergan's sources. Doran (1990)<sup>62</sup> examined the way that "apprehensions of value" could be fitted into Lonergan's judgement-of-fact schema. Byrne (1993)<sup>63</sup> sees the continuity of Lonergan's thought and speaks of existential discovery, and is followed here by Doorley (1996)<sup>64</sup>. Vertin (1996),<sup>65</sup> too, sees the continuity with Lonergan's Thomist writings. He will speak of a "fourth-level" deliberative insight. Writing together, Tekippe and Roy (1996)<sup>66</sup> register concerns with the later thought, and Roy (2001),<sup>67</sup> who was well acquainted with Scheler, will reject Lonergan's "knowledge born of love" (faith). Rejecting Roy's interpretation, and writing in the context of the foundations of ethics, Cronin (2006)<sup>68</sup> will take up Vertin's deliberative (or evaluative) insight. Returning to a theme introduced earlier, Doran (2011)<sup>69</sup> will develop the idea of discernment. This is not to suggest that the theme of belief is absent, for it is discussed by Lawrence (2007),<sup>70</sup> and indeed, was discussed by Crowe. However, the trend seems to be that, especially as concern has focussed on ethics (and emotivism) interpreters gravitate towards more intellectualist readings. In a word, Pascal's claim that the heart has its reasons that the reason does not know is found problematic.

In the perspective offered in this paper, however, attention has been drawn to the project, not of ethics, but of fundamental theology ecumenically conceived. It is in this context that Lonergan makes use of Pascal (as mediated by Scheler) though the insights of Hildebrand on motivation are not ignored and Lonergan's distinctive understanding of the a priori in emotional intentionality has been identified as the "notion of value." It was to integrate such ideas that Lonergan's position was conceived in terms of "the motivation theory."

This idea might be summed up by a metaphor. Generally speaking it is true: we dive for pearls because they are valuable; they are not valuable because we dive for them. There is however, a phenomenon of "transcendental feeling," of "consolation without

---

<sup>60</sup> Fred Crowe, "An Exploration of Lonergan's New Notion of Value," in *Lonergan Workshop III* (Chico, Ca.: Scholars, 1982) 1-24.

<sup>61</sup> Bernard Tyrrell, "Feelings as Apprehensive-Intentional Responses to Values," in *Lonergan Workshop 7*, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston: 1988) 331-360.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: UTP, 1990) 57-8.

<sup>63</sup> Patrick Byrne, "Analogical Knowledge of God and the Value of Moral Endeavor," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11 (1993): 103-135. Byrne has a book forthcoming on Method in Ethics.

<sup>64</sup> Mark Doorley, *The Place of the Heart in Lonergan's Ethics* (Toronto: UTP, 1996).

<sup>65</sup> Michael Vertin, "Judgments of Value for the Later Lonergan," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995): 221-248. Lonergan simply denied that the apprehension of values in feelings was an insight when asked, see Lonergan, *Early Works in Theological Method 1* 601: "No, it isn't. There is an apprehension preceding it but what is perceived, or what is understood, or what is affirmed is revealed to be valuable by your feelings with regard to it. Feelings as revelatory, just as they reveal what you like and dislike, also reveal what is and what is not valuable, what is and is not truly good."

<sup>66</sup> Terry Tekippe and Louis Roy, "Lonergan and the Fourth Level of Intentionality," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 70/2 (1996): 225-42.

<sup>67</sup> Louis Roy, *Transcendent Experiences: Phenomenology and Critique* (Toronto: UTP, 2001).

<sup>68</sup> Brian Cronin, *Value Ethics: A Lonergan Perspective* (Nairobi: Consolata, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> Robert Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: UTP, 2005) 103-6.

<sup>70</sup> Fred Lawrence, "The Ethics of Authenticity and the Human Good, in Honour of Michael Vertin, an Authentic Colleague," in John J. Jr Liptay and David, S. Liptay (eds), *The Importance of Insight* (Toronto: UTP, 2007) 127-150.

cause” of a self-transcendence that can be felt, and this provides the exception to the rule. Here it is as if we dive for something valuable. This, so to speak, raises the question of pearls and the treasure to which we respond with the “very stirring of our being.”

---

**Author:** *Christopher Friel BSc, MA, has been a mathematics teacher for many years and is currently completing a doctorate in Catholic Studies on Credibility and Value in Lonergan at Maryvale Institute, UK. He has recently completed a Lonergan Fellowship at Boston College exploring Lonergan's philosophy of science.*  
Email: [christopherseanfriel@hotmail.com](mailto:christopherseanfriel@hotmail.com)

---

© Christopher Friel 2014