THE ONTOGENETIC GROUND OF VALUE

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IN THE LAST CHAPTER of the script for his recent popular television series on *The Ascent of Man*, Jacob Bronowski raises the question about man's continued ascent.[1] For "the ascent of man is always teetering in the balance. There is always a sense of uncertainty, whether when man lifts his foot for the next step it is really going to come down pointing ahead."[2] For Bronowski, this is finally a question today of the moral ascent of man, of our ability and willingness through knowledgeable, responsible decisions to take deliberate control of our own lives in a fully human way. "Our actions as adults, as decision makers, as human beings," he says, "are mediated by values. . . . "[3] And, to Bronowski, the fact of "human development means we are concerned in our early education actually with the postponement of decisions. . . . We *have* to put off the decision making process, in order to accumulate enough knowledge as a preparation for the future."[4] But this "knowledge is not a loose-leaf notebook of facts. Above all," says Bronowski, "it is a responsibility for the integrity of what we are as ethical creatures. You cannot possibly maintain that informed integrity," he claims, "if you let other people run the world for you while you yourself continue to live out of a ragbag of morals that come from past beliefs. This is really crucial today."[5] For, in Bronowski's view, "we are nature's unique experiment to make the rational intelligence prove itself sounder than the reflex. Knowledge is our destiny. Self-knowledge, at last bringing together the experience of the arts and the explanations of science, waits ahead of us."[6]

For Bronowski, then, the question of man's continued ascent turns on this moral issue of self-knowledge. Will we meet the challenge of our destiny to take our lives into our own hands, to direct them by the informed decisions of our own personal consciences, or, through a "loss of nerve," as Bronowski puts it,[7] will we retreat into a "hand-me-down" morality whose authority is "the way things have always been" and whose ultimate commandment is "Thou shalt not question."[8] Bronowski, of course, makes no attempt in his closing remarks on *The Ascent of Man* to specify the character of this crucial self-knowledge. He means only to

[1] Jacob Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973) 436. The chapter is titled "The Long Childhood."

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. 423–24.

[5] Ibid. 436.

[6] Ibid. 437.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid. 427.

raise the question for us, and it is this fundamental ethical question that I shall explore in this paper within the context of Bernard Lonergan's transcendental analysis of the human subject and the developmental perspectives of Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg.

Perhaps the most significant attempt at an answer to our question has been the emergence during the last century—especially in existentialist thought—of *authenticity* as the dominant ideal of the moral life. Compared to sincerity, the "congruence between avowal and actual feeling," the word "authenticity" suggests to Lionel Trilling "a more strenuous moral experience ... a more exigent conception of the self and of what being true to it consists in, a wider reference to the universe and man's place in it, and a less acceptant and genial view of the social circumstances of life."[9] Though more demanding than the ideal of sincerity which it replaced, authenticity is not, as Trilling argues, entirely unambiguous, giving moral authority, as it on occasion has, even to such traditionally condemned realities as violence and unreason. The difficulty, I suggest, is that authenticity is not a criterion of the moral life, as Trilling says it is, but an ideal which stands in need of a criterion.

THE TRANSCENDENTAL NOTION OF VALUE

It is within the context of this contemporary emphasis on authenticity as an ideal of the moral life that Bernard Lonergan has asked: "What is authentic or genuine realization of human potentiality?"[10] "In a word," he says, "my answer is that authentic realization is a self-transcending realization."[11] Authentic self-realization, in other words, is to be found in nothing other than self-transcendence. "Man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence."[12]

The point here is that the *criterion* of human authenticity (as an ideal) is precisely the *self-transcendence* that is effected through sensitive and creative understanding, critical judgment, responsible decision, loyal commitment, and genuine love. Though the term "self-transcendence" has many meanings, some of them quite vague and mysterious, for Lonergan it refers primarily to the threefold achievement of "moving beyond one's own self" that is realized in every instance of correct understanding (cognitive), responsible decision (moral), and genuine love (affective).[13]

But these achievements of self-transcendence do not simply happen;

[9] Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1972) 2 and 11.

[10] Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, ed. W. Ryan and B. Tyrrell (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1975) 166.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 104. Designated below as *Method.*

[13] Ibid. 289.

they occur, when they do, says Lonergan, in response to questions —questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, questions for deliberation—questions which manifest themselves on many levels of consciousness as "successive stages in the unfolding of a single thrust, the eros of the human spirit,"[14] questions which most radically "constitute our capacity for self-transcendence."[15] "Self-transcendence is the achievement of conscious intentionality,"[16] and these questions, these "transcendental notions," as Lonergan names them, are the "dynamism of conscious intentionality."[17]

Value, or the good, is such a *transcendental notion.*[18] "It is what is intended in questions for deliberation, just as the intelligible is what is intended in questions for intelligence, and just as truth and being are what are intended in questions for reflection."[19] " . . . When I ask whether this is truly and not merely apparently good, whether that is or is not worth while," says Lonergan, "I do not yet know value but I am intending value."[20] Just "as the notion of being is the dynamic principle that keeps us moving toward ever fuller knowledge of being, so the notion of value is the fuller flowering of the same dynamic principle that keeps us moving toward ever fuller realization of the good, of what is worth while."[21] Thus, as Lonergan puts it, by deliberation, evaluation, decision, and action in response to the dynamism of the transcendental notion of value

> we can know and do, not just what pleases us, but what truly is good, worth while. Then we can be principles of benevolence and beneficence, capable of

[14] Ibid. 13.

[15] Ibid. 105.

[16] Ibid. 35.

[17] Ibid. 34.

[18] See *Method* 12 for Lonergan's distinction between transcendental *notion* of value and transcendental *concept* of value; also see "Value" in Index of *Method* for references to other important distinctions, such as that between originating value and terminal value. This paper presupposes Frederick E. Crowe's careful study of the transcendental notion of value in "An Exploration of Lonergan's New Notion of Value," *Science et esprit* 29 (1977) 123–43; of particular interest is Crowe's emphasis on the self-correcting process of learning in connection with judgments of value. Also see my "Bernard Lonergan on Value," *Thomist* 40 (1976) 244–51.

[19] *Method* 34. The importance of Lonergan's understanding of value as a transcendental notion for developing an adequate foundational ethics becomes especially clear in the context of a recent article on "Morality by Calculation of Values" *(Theology Digest* 23 [Winter, 1975] 347–64), where Paul Quay criticizes the "theology of values" which he sees operative in the writings of such prominent Roman Catholic moral theologians as Josef Fuchs, Richard McCormick, John Giles Milhaven, John Dedek, Charles Curran, and Bruno Schüller. Quay starts from and bases his criticism on the position that "unlike the good, value is not transcendental; hence, it is not convertible with being; hence, there are aspects or modes of being which must perforce escape any discussion in terms of values" (350).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Bernard Lonergan, *The Subject* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1968) 24. This essay is also included in *A Second Collection* 69–86.

genuine collaboration and of true love. But it is one thing to do this occasionally, by fits and starts. It is another to do it regularly, easily, spontaneously. It is, finally, only by reaching the sustained self-transcendence of the virtuous man that one becomes a good judge, not on this or that human act, but on the whole range of human goodness.[22]

What I find particularly significant in Lonergan's explication of this transcendental notion of value is the fact, as the above reference to the "virtuous man" points up, that it directs our inquiry about "value" back to the actual *questioning capacity of the concrete personal subject*; for transcendental notions are not abstract but "utterly concrete." And no more than truth, reality, or being, as Lonergan has so consistently emphasized, is value "already-out-there-now." Rather, as reality is what is known in true factual judgments of critical, self-transcending subjects, so value is what is known and realized in the true value judgments and authentic decisions of responsible, self-transcending subjects. Further, just as true judgments of fact are rooted concretely in the actual cognitive capacities of individual personal subjects at some particular stage of horizon development, so too are authentic judgments and responsible choices of values rooted in a concrete personal subject's present actual capacities of discernment and willingness.[23]

In his 1968 Aquinas Lecture on *The Subject*, where the transcendental notion of value was first introduced in an explicit way and paralleled with the notion of being, Lonergan, speaking about the "objectivity of truth," tells us that "intentionally it is independent of the subject, but ontologically it resides only in the subject: *veritas formaliter est in solo judicio.* Intentionally, it goes completely beyond the subject, yet it does so only because ontologically the subject is capable of an intentional self-transcendence. . . ."[24] Moreover,

before the subject can attain the self-transcendence of truth, there is the slow and laborious process of conception, gestation, parturition. But teaching and learning, investigating, coming to understand, marshalling and weighing the evidence, these are not independent of the subject, of times and places, of psychological, social, historical conditions. The fruit of truth must grow and mature on the tree of the subject, before it can be plucked and placed in its absolute realm.[25]

Now this same stress on the concretely developing subject, I am proposing, can and must be included in our understanding of value. Also, if, as

[22] *Method* 35.

[23] On "willingness," see Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957) 623. For a valuable analysis of "discernment," see James M. Gustafson, "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life," in his *Theology and Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press Book of United Church Press, 1974) 99–119.

[24] *The Subject* 3.

[25] Ibid.

Lonergan says, "one can be so fascinated by the objectivity of truth," and "so emphasize objective truth as to disregard or undermine the very conditions of its emergence and existence,"[26] we must recognize that the same danger exists regarding our understanding of value. For it is easy to so dwell on the objectivity of values as specified in the prescriptions and rules of moral codes that we forget their necessary grounding in the self-transcending capacities of the personal subject.

Now, as Lonergan stresses, the subject of our concern here is not "man," "human nature," nor any other such abstraction; it is the *concrete*, individual personal subject. And such personal subjects differ significantly. So if we are to speak meaningfully about value, we must speak not merely about the abstract capacity for cognitive or moral self-transcendence, but about the specific, concrete capacities of individual personal subjects. It was for this reason, perhaps, that, as Lonergan explains, Aristotle refused "to speak of ethics apart from the ethical reality of good men, of justice apart from men that are just, of temperance apart from men that are temperate, of the nature of virtue apart from the judgment of the man that possesses practical wisdom."[27]

Now, to speak about an individual subject's concrete capacity for the realization of value in moral self-transcendence is to speak about the specific texture of his or her personal moral consciousness. And when such moral consciousness is recognized as constituted by a radical dynamism of the human spirit revealing itself in a drive for meaning, truth, and value, we have what is perhaps the most fundamental understanding of the term "conscience."[28]

What I want to point up here, then, is first that the transcendental notion of value, the radical question for deliberation (understood as sublating the questions for intelligence and reflection), is concretely experienced as conscience. Secondly, the values to be realized in any concrete human situation must be understood as the objective correlatives of the transcendental notion of value as concretized in a particular personal subject, i.e., of character. For value is relational; value does not exist in and by itself; value is value for, value for a valuing subject.[29] Therefore, the "values" of a given situation will be perceived by a particular person according to the concrete shape that the transcendental notion of value, the capacity to raise questions for deliberation, has taken in that person, according, we might say, to the present actual development

[26] Ibid. 3–4. [27] Ibid. 25.

[28] For a detailed explication of this point, see my Columbia University doctoral dissertation on *Conscience and Self-Transcendence* (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1973).

[29] See "The Center of Value," Supplementary Essay in H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1960) 100–113.

of that person's conscience, according, that is, to his or her character. For any adequate analysis of values, then, it becomes crucial to study the concrete forms that are in fact taken by the radical drive for self-transcendence, the transcendental notion of value, moral consciousness, or conscience in a person's development.

SELF-TRANSCENDENCE IN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

For this task, I have personally found the work of three psychologists—Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg—especially helpful, inasmuch as their complementary perspectives not only specify the concreteness of moral consciousness or conscience developmentally, but also implicitly employ a criterion of self-transcendence for the very meaning of development.[30] In other words, the same norm of self-transcendence which Lonergan specifies as a criterion for authentic realization of human potentiality is built into these psychological analyses of the concrete development of the radical dynamism of the human spirit. As a result, when we say that value is relational, related to a concrete personal subject, we are not saying that value is relative in the sense of being arbitrary; for the present development of the person's moral consciousness is itself subject to the criterion of self-transcendence. Personal subjects perceive, judge, choose, and so realize various values, but those realized values will be only as authentically human as the perceptions, judgments, and choices of the subjects are self-transcending.[31]

A brief consideration of the developmental analyses of Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg in terms of the criterion of self-transcendence should help us to pin down more specifically the way in which the transcendental notion of value takes shape and functions concretely in our moral life.

Erikson

In his recent *Life History and the Historical Moment* Erikson summarizes his view on the relationship between personal development and values this way:

[30] See *Conscience and Self-Transcendence*, chap. 2: "Self-Transcendence in Psychological Theories of Development." By differentiating the stages and specifying the dynamics of value *development*, the analyses of Erikson, Piaget, and especially Kohlberg provide an appropriate empirical complement to the more phenomenological/intuitive axiological analysis of Scheler and von Hildebrand, which Lonergan explicitly (but selectively) relies upon in *Method*, where values are distinguished according to an ascending scale of preference: vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious (*Method* 31). Lonergan recognizes the development of feelings and values, but does not explicate this development in any detail (*Method* 32). See my "Bernard Lonergan on Value" 251–57.

[31] Just as "the remote criterion [of truth] is the proper unfolding of the detached and disinterested desire to know," we may understand the remote criterion of value to be the proper unfolding of the radical drive of the human spirit for real (moral) self-transcendence in the realization of value. See Lonergan, *Insight* 550.

> Morality and ethics must evolve in each person in a step-by-step development through ever more differentiated and insightful stages. Even as each earlier stage lives on in all the later ones, each later stage can represent a reintegration of all earlier ones on a higher level. But this also implies a continuing and inexorable *dynamic conflict* between the earlier and most primitive, and the later, more mature values in each person—and in all communities.[32]
>
> The first requirement for a psychoanalytic study of moral values and ethics, then, is the *epigenetic* point of view which postulates that the ethical core which is built into all of us phylogenetically must evolve in each of us ontogenetically—that is, through the mediation of the generational process. Developmentally speaking, we must, then, differentiate between an earlier, *moral* conscience and a later, *ethical* sense. What psychoanalysis graphically calls our super-ego, that part of our conscience which lords it over us (and at times seems to crush us), is primarily the ready recipient of prohibitions driven into us in childhood by frowning faces and moral threats, if not beaten into us by physical punishment—and this before we can possibly understand the meaning of it all. In later life, this remains our moralistic side—that side of us which takes pleasure in turning on others and condemning those who are doing what we dare not do, or in hating or wishing to do away with those who, so we claim, are endangering the moral fiber of our kind of mankind.[33]

From within this developmental perspective, perhaps Erikson's most significant contribution to a concrete specification of the transcendental notion of value as the dynamic capacity for moral self-transcendence has been his differentiation and explication of distinct psychosocial strengths or virtues characteristic of each of eight stages of personal development. For these human virtues are nothing else, really, than the specific shapes in which a person's concrete power as an originating[34] value manifests itself in the affective dimension. Erikson makes this point by using the word "virtue" to underscore, as he says, "the fact that only basic strength can guarantee potency to any value; that ego strength develops from an interplay of personal and social structures; and that it emerges, as do all human capacities, in stages of development. . . ."[35]

Erikson specifies these virtues or ego-strengths, which emerge from successful resolutions of the psychosocial crises of successive stages, in this way: (1) infancy: *hope* rooted in a basic trust; (2) early childhood: *will* grounded in autonomy; (3) play age: *purpose* in initiative; (4) school age: industrious *competence;* (5) adolescence: the *fidelity* of identity; (6)

[32] Erik Erikson, *Life History and the Historical Moment* (New York: Norton, 1975) 261–62.

[33] Ibid. 261. For an analysis of Erikson's contribution to ethical thought from the perspective of self-transcendence as a criterion, see my "Erik Erikson: The Ethical Orientation, Conscience, and the Golden Rule," *JRE* 5 (1977) 249–66.

[34] *Method* 51.

[35] Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964) 175.

young adulthood: the *love* of intimacy; (7) adulthood: generative *care;* (8) old age: the *wisdom* of integrity.[36] We cannot examine all of these virtues in detail, but it may be helpful to take a closer look at just the first of them, the hope that is rooted in basic trust.

It seems particularly illuminating in relation to the theme of self-transcendence that the first psychosocial crisis of Erikson's life cycle—the infant's struggle to work out a balance favoring basic trust over against mistrust—brings forth, if successfully resolved, the fundamental strength or virtue of hope. For more than anything else it is the rudimentary trust or hope resulting from this first critical stage that forms the bedrock for adult faith, in many ways the very epitome of self-transcendence. But an incipient self-transcendence is already manifest in the favorable resolution of this first psychosocial crisis, which is primarily a function of the quality of maternal care.

Basically, Erikson understands hope as "the enduring belief in the attainability of fervent wishes, in spite of the dark urges and rages which mark the beginning of existence."[37] Hope is not only the earliest but the "most indispensable virtue inherent in the state of being alive," says Erikson.[38] " ... If life is to be sustained hope must remain, even where confidence is wounded, trust impaired."[39] For the adult, serious loss of hope means regression into a state of virtual lifelessness.[40] But even mature hope, Erikson suggests, is of all the ego-qualities the most child-like, and the "most dependent for its verification on the charity of fate."[41] In Erikson's view, hope, though independent of the verifiability of "hopes" once it is established as a basic quality of experience, is no exception to the fundamental rule that "nothing in human life ... is secured in its origins unless it is verified in the intimate meeting of partners in favorable social settings."[42]

While the later virtues of fidelity, love, care, and wisdom may be the most obvious as springboards for moving beyond oneself, all the virtues of the life cycle are clearly just as important sources of personal self-transcendence. And "in all their seeming discontinuity," Erikson maintains, the various virtues nevertheless "depend on each other. Will cannot be trained until hope is secure, nor can love become reciprocal until fidelity has proven reliable."[43] Erikson also emphasizes that "each virtue and its place in the schedule of all virtues is vitally interrelated to other segments of human development, such as the stages of psychosexuality ..., the psychosocial crises, and the steps of cognitive maturation."[44]

[36] See ibid. 111-34.

[37] Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968) 118.

[38] *Insight and Responsibility* 115.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid. 116.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid. 115.

[44] Ibid.

Piaget

What Erikson refers to here as "the steps of cognitive maturation" have been detailed with great explanatory power by Jean Piaget. In broadest outline, Piaget has specified four general stages of cognitive development from infancy through adolescence: (1) sensorimotor intelligence, 0–2 years; (2) symbolic and intuitive preoperational thought, 2–7 years; (3) concrete operational thought, 7–11 years; and (4) formal operational thought, 11–15 years. We cannot consider the details of each of these stages here,[45] but in order to highlight the operative criterion of self-transcendence in cognitional development we can concentrate on the critical break-through which occurs with the emergence of what Piaget calls concrete operational thought in middle childhood.

The key to understanding this fundamental cognitive break-through, I think, is to be found in the word "system." "Operational" thought is *systematic*. Unlike preoperational intuitions that are sporadic and isolated, "operations are always coordinated into total structures, for example, the system of classification, or an ordered series, or the series of natural numbers, or one-to-one correspondences, and so forth."[46] Total structures like these constitute a new field of very powerful cognitive instruments.

An essential quality of operational thought for Piaget is "reversibility," the flexibility that allows one to "return to the past in thought,"[47] to "return to the point of departure."[48] For example, unlike her younger brother, the older child recognizes the constancy or permanence of substance, weight, and volume in a ball of clay that has been flattened into a cake, because she realizes that "you can remake a ball from the cake."[49] It is such operations that "result in a correction of perceptual intuition—which is always a victim of illusions of the moment—and which 'decenter' egocentricity so as to transform transitory relationships into a coherent system of objective, permanent relations."[50]

But concrete operations, as their name makes clear, are *concrete;* as

[45] For a brief summary of all these stages, see Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1969). Piaget's genetic epistemology is explicated in terms of self-transcendence in my "Objectivity—A Developmental and Structural Analysis: The Epistemologies of Jean Piaget and Bernard Lonergan," *Dialectica* 30 (1976) 197–221. The most adequate explanation of Piaget's theoretical foundation is in his recent *The Development of Thought: Equilibration of Cognitive Structures* (New York: Viking, 1977), where he reformulates his understanding of cognitive development as a series of equilibrations.

[46] From "A Dialogue with Piaget," in Richard I. Evans, *Jean Piaget: The Man and His Ideas* (New York: Dutton, 1973) 25–26.

[47] Ibid. 25.

[48] Jean Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies*, ed. David Elkind (New York: Vintage, 1968) 46.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

Piaget puts it, "in sum, concrete thought remains essentially attached to empirical reality," applying only to objects themselves.[51] And like their preoperational predecessors, concrete operations always take their starting point in the concrete, empirically real, not in the potential, as do the formal operations of the adolescent.

Still, the essential point to be grasped about concrete thought is that it is *operational*; for operations are the central factor in the breakthrough which enables the cognitive subject to transcend himself by radically relativizing his own perspective as he places himself in the context of many viewpoints that are related in a coherent, permanent, and objective system.

According to Piaget, with formal operational thought comes the "possibility of applying operations not only to objects, but to hypotheses, formulated in words. To work with hypotheses, one must be capable of carrying out operations on operations, . . . which open up a much broader field of possibilities. In particular, we now have the possibility of . . . combinatorial [analysis], by means of which we can relate any proposition to any other proposition, or any operation to any other operation."[52]

Basically, the formal operational thought of adolescence is an expansion into the realm of "the possible" of the earlier operational breakthrough of middle childhood. Piaget says that if the adolescent is characterized affectively and socially by a "liberation from the concrete in favor of interest oriented toward the non-present and the future," it is because as a cognitive subject he has succeeded "in freeing himself from the concrete and locating reality within a group of possible transformations."[53] The key, operative word here, to repeat, is "possible"; for, as John Flavell rightly emphasizes, "the most important general property of formal-operational thought, the one from which Piaget derives all others, concerns the *real* versus the *possible*."[54] Flavell's explanation of this fundamental point in Piaget's theory is clear and concise:

Unlike the concrete-operational child, the adolescent begins his consideration of the problem at hand by trying to envisage all the possible relations which could hold true in the data and then attempts, through a combination of experimentation and logical analysis, to find out which of these possible relations in fact do hold true. Reality is thus conceived as a special subset within the totality of things which the data would admit as hypotheses; it is seen as the "is" portion of a

[51] Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence* (New York: Basic Books, 1958) 250.

[52] Evans 26–27.

[53] *The Psychology of the Child* 130.

[54] John Flavell, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1963) 204. This excellent volume is clearly the most comprehensive and important study of Piaget's thought available in English.

"might be" totality, the portion it is the subject's job to discover.[55]

Thus, as the transition from a preoperational stage to concrete operations constitutes an "initial and major step towards liberation from a slavish and distorting accommodation to immediate reality," Flavell emphasizes that this "liberation takes another giant stride in adolescence with [the] reversal in roles between the real and the possible," a reversal, he says, which "amounts to a fundamental reorientation towards cognitive problems."[56]

When functioning optimally in the interpretation of empirical reality, these formal operations constitute the culmination of a fundamental process of increasing cognitive self-transcendence that begins in infancy and continues through adolescence to adulthood. To put it another way, the basic epistemological thesis in Piaget's genetic perspective is *objectivity through decentration*, a normative process of cognitive development moving *from egocentrism to self-transcendence.*

Kohlberg

So far, we have seen that Erikson implicitly maintains self-transcendence as a criterion of mature development in the psychosocial or affective dimension, and that Piaget maintains the same criterion in the cognitive sphere. These, of course, are only methodologically distinct aspects of one concrete process of fully personal development. One of the areas in which their fundamental unity and interpenetration is most obvious is the moral (perhaps because, in any significant sense of the word, the moral is really nothing else than the human in its fullest dimensions as focused on judgments, decisions, and choices of values). It should not be surprising, therefore, that Lawrence Kohlberg's analysis of the development of moral consciousness highlights the same normative direction of self-transcendence—this time from an egocentric instrumental hedonism of early childhood to the highest stage of a principled conscience.

As is by now well known, Kohlberg, by means of longitudinal and cross-cultural studies analyzing responses made to questions about classic "moral dilemma" stories, has formulated the following stages of development in moral judgment:

I. Preconventional Level

At this level the child is responsive to cultural rules and labels of good and bad, right or wrong, but interprets these labels in terms of either the physical or the hedonistic consequences of actions (punishment, reward, exchange of favors) or in terms of the physical power of those who enunciate the rules and labels. The

[55] Ibid. 204–5.

[56] Ibid. 205.

level is divided into the following two stages:

Stage 1. The Punishment and Obedience Orientation. The physical consequences of action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right, not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order supported by punishment and authority (the latter being stage 4).

Stage 2. The Instrumental Relativist Orientation. Right action consists of that which instrumentally satisfies one's own needs and occasionally the needs of others. Human relations are viewed in terms like those of the marketplace. Elements of fairness, of reciprocity, and equal sharing are present, but they are always interpreted in a physical, pragmatic way. Reciprocity is a matter of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," not of loyalty, gratitude, or justice.

II. Conventional Level

At this level, maintaining the expectations of the individual's family, group, or nation is perceived as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences. The attitude is not only one of conformity to personal expectations and social order, but of loyalty to it, of actively maintaining, supporting, and justifying the order and of identifying with the persons or groups involved in it. At this level there are the following two stages:

Stage 3. The Interpersonal Concordance or "Good Boy-Nice Girl" Orientation. Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others and is approved by them. There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is majority or "natural" behavior. Behavior is frequently judged by intention—"he means well" becomes important for the first time. One earns approval by being "nice."

Stage 4. The "Law-and-Order" Orientation. There is orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order. Right behavior consists of doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.

III. Postconventional, Autonomous, or Principled Level

At this level, there is a clear effort to define moral values and principles which have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles and apart from the individual's own identification with these groups. This level again has two stages:

Stage 5. The Social Contract Legalistic Orientation. This level generally has utilitarian overtones. Right action tends to be defined in terms of general individual rights and in terms of standards which have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society. There is a clear awareness of the relativism of personal values and opinions and a corresponding emphasis upon procedural rules for reaching consensus. Aside from what is constitutionally and democratically

agreed upon, the right is a matter of personal "values" and "opinion." The result is an emphasis upon the "legal point of view," but with an emphasis upon the possibility of changing law in terms of rational considerations of social utility (rather than freezing it in terms of stage 4 "law and order"). Outside the legal realm, free agreement and contract is the binding element of obligation. This is the "official" morality of the American government and Constitution.

Stage 6. The Universal Ethical Principle Orientation. Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical (the Golden Rule, the categorical imperative); they are not concrete moral rules like the Ten Commandments. At heart, these are universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of ... human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.[57]

To specify what these stages mean concretely in terms of value, we can consider how the value of human life, one of the twenty-five basic moral concepts or categories used to construct the dilemmas, takes shape in each of the six stages:

Stage 1. No differentiation between moral value of life and its physical or social-status value. The value of a human life and the approval of actions affecting a human life are both judged in terms of visible or assumed external attributes....

Stage 2. The value of a human life is seen as instrumental to the satisfaction of the needs of its possessor or of other persons. Decision to save life is relative to, or to be made by, its possessor. (Differentiation of physical and interest value of life, differentiation of its value to self and to other.)....

Stage 3. The value of a human life is based on the empathy and affection of family members and others toward its possessor. (The value of human life, as based on social sharing, community, and love is differentiated from the instrumental and hedonistic value of life applicable also to animals.)....

Stage 4. Life is conceived as sacred in terms of its place in a categorical moral or religious order of rights and duties. (The value of human life, as a categorical member of a moral order, is differentiated from its value to specific other people

[57] Lawrence Kohlberg, "Indoctrination versus Relativity in Value Education," *Zygon* 6 (1971) 296–97. In recent writings Kohlberg has suggested the "purely metaphorical notion of a Stage 7 as pointing to some meaningful solutions" to the questions "Why be moral?", "Why be just in a universe full of injustice?", which ultimately entail the ontological or religious question "Why live?" See, e.g., "Moral Development in Aging Human Beings," *Gerontologist* 13 (1973) 497–502. For critical assessment of Kohlberg's theory, see Paul J. Philibert, "Lawrence Kohlberg's Use of Virtue in His Theory of Moral Development," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1975) 455–97, and my "Postconventional Morality: An Exposition and Critique of Lawrence Kohlberg's Analysis of Moral Development in the Adolescent and Adult," *Lumen vitae* 30 (1975) 213–30.

in the family, etc. Value of life is partly dependent upon serving the group, the state, or God, however.)....

Stage 5. Life is valued both in terms of its relation to community welfare and in terms of being a universal human right. (Obligation to respect the basic right to life is differentiated from generalized respect for the sociomoral order. The general value of the independent human life is a primary autonomous value not dependent upon other values.)....

Stage 6. Belief in the sacredness of human life as representing a universal human value of respect for the individual. (The moral value of a human being, as an object of moral principle, is differentiated from a formal recognition of his rights.)[58]

Such an example makes clear, I think, that values, like all meanings, do not have some independent "already-out-there-now" univocal existence of their own, but are rather functions of the interaction between the actual development of concrete personal subjects and their human environments. It also indicates the possibility of specifying within a developmental schema a *normative*, fully human understanding of such values as "human life."

We cannot consider all of Kohlberg's stages in detail, but we should focus on the transition from conventional to postconventional morality, as well as the relation Kohlberg sees between it and the cognitive shift from concrete to formal operational thought. Kohlberg makes the point this way:

The shift in adolescence from concrete to formal operations, the ability now to see the given as only a subset of the possible and to spin out the alternatives, constitutes the necessary precondition for the transition from conventional to principled moral reasoning. It is in adolescence, then, that the child has the cognitive capability for moving from a conventional to a postconventional, reflective, or philosophic view of values and society.

The rejection of conventional moral reasoning begins with the perception of relativism, the awareness that any given society's definition of right and wrong, however legitimate, is only one among many, both in fact and in theory.[59]

This last point about the perception of relativism is an important one which we shall return to in our discussion of moral conversion. What I want to emphasize now, however, is that while Kohlberg sees a close connection between cognitive stages and moral stages, and even calls his

[58] Dwight Boyd and Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Is-Ought Problem: A Developmental Perspective," *Zygon* 8 (1973) 368–70. See 362–63 of this article for a list of the twenty-five basic moral concepts or categories used in the studies.

[59] Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan, "The Adolescent as a Philosopher: The Discovery of the Self in a Post-conventional World," *Daedalus* 100 (1971) 1072.

approach to morality "cognitive-developmental," his central point "is not that moral judgment stages are cognitive—they are not the mere application of logic to moral problems—but that the existence of moral stages implies that normal development has a basic cognitive-structural component."[60] In other words, "cognitive maturity is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for moral judgment maturity. While formal operations may be necessary for principled morality, one may be a theoretical physicist and yet not make moral judgments at the principled level."[61] For example, in one study Kohlberg found that 60 per cent of subjects over sixteen had attained formal operations, but that only 10 per cent showed clear principled moral thinking of stages 5 or 6, and all of these were members of the group with formal operations.[62]

More goes into mature moral judgments, in other words, than the necessary logical, cognitive ability of formal operations. And this "more" points us to the psychosocial dimension of affectivity, where solid development is just as important for mature moral thinking as is advanced development in the cognitive dimension; for this is in a sense the experiential matrix for our moral judgments. As Lonergan has put it, value is apprehended in feelings.[63]

And moral thinking or judgment, of course, is not the whole of the moral life. If cognitive maturity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for mature moral judgment, the same is true a fortiori for moral action, where decision plays such a central role in further response to the drive for self-transcendence as manifested in the exigence to responsibly conform decision to critical, realistic judgment of what should be done to realize value in a given human situation. In the psychological terms of the developmental perspective we have been discussing, we may say that the only answer to the problematic of moral judgment (as analyzed by Kohlberg) and the larger dimension of moral life focused on responsible decision and action lies within the realm of the total personality that integrates not only the cognitive maturity of formal operations but also the affective maturity that Erikson finds rooted in the virtues of ego identity.

One of Kohlberg's central discoveries is that not only do relatively few adults ever reach the fullness of cognitive powers as specified by Piaget's formal operations, but significantly fewer still ever attain the highest level of moral judgment and personal commitment. Those persons who do reach such normative moral maturity can, in my judgment, be said to have experienced a genuine *conversion*, the nature of which we shall now briefly examine in the next and final section within the context of Lonergan's analysis.

[60] Ibid. 1071.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] *Method* 37.

CRITICAL MORAL CONVERSION

Conversion, in Lonergan's analysis, is the "about-face" by which one moves into a new horizon; it is the beginning of a "new sequence that can keep revealing ever greater depth and breadth and wealth."[64] "Conversion, as lived," he says, "affects all of a man's conscious and intentional operations. It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of his psyche. It enriches his understanding, guides his judgments, reinforces his decisions."[65]

For Lonergan, "conversion may be intellectual or moral or religious."[66] Now, although Lonergan explicitly understands conversion as a "modality of self-transcendence,"[67] we notice here a slight shift from the analysis in which the dimensions of self-transcendence are delineated as cognitive, moral, and affective[68]—a shift from *affective* self-transcendence to *religious* conversion. Of course, in his consideration of self-transcendence, Lonergan stresses that there are "different kinds of love,"[69] and that "being in love with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion,"[70] the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality,[71] of the capacity and desire of the human spirit for self-transcendence.[72] So there is a definite connection between affective self-transcendence and religious conversion. A question that arises, however, is whether on the basis of Lonergan's analysis there is also a more basic *affective conversion*, a conversion to "being-in-love" which, though not explicitly religious, is the "first principle" of one's life, from which "flow one's desires and fears, one's joys and sorrows, one's discernment of values, one's decisions and deeds."[73] Such an affective conversion might be considered the beginning of a development that may continue and reach its fulfilment in the unrestricted love of God of a radical religious conversion.

[64] Ibid. 238–39.

[65] Ibid. 131.

[66] Ibid. 238. For a critical discussion of Lonergan's understanding of conversion, see Charles E. Curran, "Christian Conversion in the Writings of Bernard Lonergan," in *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970*, ed. P. McShane (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1972) 41–59. For a variety of views on conversion from historical, philosophical, psychological, biblical, and theological perspectives, see my edited collection *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation* (New York: Alba, 1978).

[67] Ibid. 241.

[68] Ibid. 104–5, 289.

[69] Ibid. 289.

[70] Ibid. 105.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid. 242.

[73] Ibid. 105. See my basic explication of "affective conversion" in *Conscience and Self-Transcendence* 522–26. Lonergan has recently made a brief reference to "affective conversion" in an essay on "Natural Right and History" in the 1977 *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*. For a quite different but related development of Lonergan's understanding of conversion in terms of Jungian depth psychology, see Robert Doran, "Psychic Conversion," *Thomist* 41 (1977) 200–236.

If we recognize such a basic affective conversion, our account of conversion, specifying now intellectual, moral, and affective (religious), correlates more closely not only with Lonergan's delineation of the dimensions of self-transcendence (cognitive, moral, affective) but also with the fundamental dimensions of personality distinguished in the developmental analyses of Erikson (psychosocial/affective), Piaget (cognitive), and Kohlberg (moral).

Now this reference back to the developmental analyses, in which the moral was considered not as something different from the cognitive and affective, but as the cognitive/affective focused specifically on the question of value, suggests that we might view Lonergan's analysis of self-transcendence from the same angle.

This view would see the possibility of moral self-transcendence as grounded in the joint capacities for cognitive and affective self-transcendence as focused on value. Lonergan has pointed out that "distinct from operational development is the development of feelings,"[74] and that the feeling of intentional responses "gives intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive power. Without these feelings our knowing and deciding would be paper thin."[75] And this is so not only because values are apprehended in and through feelings, but because the affective dimension of our being carries forth and makes efficacious the drive for real self-transcendence that is revealed in questions for deliberation and the exigence to conform our decisions to our best judgments. In other words, without cognitive and affective self-transcendence there is no moral self-transcendence. As I have tried to indicate, I think that this view represents Lonergan's position; I am simply trying to make it more explicit by approaching the question from a slightly different angle.

Piaget has said that cognitive and affective development are two dimensions of a single process of personal development.[76] Here I am attempting to clarify how we can understand cognitive and affective self-transcendence as two dimensions of a single drive for fully personal self-transcendence, which, when focused explicitly on the judgments and decisions of value, we call moral self-transcendence. Lonergan suggests this view when he says:

> Finally, the development of knowledge and the development of moral feeling head to the existential discovery of oneself as a moral being, the realization that one not only chooses between courses of action but also thereby makes oneself an authentic human being or an unauthentic one. With that discovery, there emerges in consciousness the significance of personal value and the meaning of personal responsibility.[77]

[74] Ibid. 30.
[75] Ibid. 30–31.
[76] *The Psychology of the Child* 114.
[77] *Method* 38.

It is precisely such a discovery of oneself as a moral being, I am maintaining, that constitutes the very core of the necessary self-knowledge which in Bronowski's view waits ahead of us in the unique experiment of human history.

If we return now to the question of conversion, we may ask how intellectual, moral, and affective (religious) conversions are related. Lonergan, of course, says that when intellectual, moral, and religious conversions occur within a single consciousness, it is possible to "conceive their relations in terms of sublation."[78] He also says that while religious conversion may be conceived as sublating moral, and moral as sublating intellectual, it is not to be inferred that intellectual necessarily occurs first, then moral, then religious. On the contrary, he says, the order of occurrence is normally just the opposite.[79] Since our principal concern here is value, I will focus the discussion on the character of moral conversion, attempting to indicate how the other conversions may be related.

Lonergan tells us that basically "moral conversion changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfactions to values"; it "consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict."[80] Such conversion, however, "falls far short of moral perfection. Deciding is one thing, doing is another."[81] Such moral conversion seems to be independent of any other conversion, inasmuch as this shift of criterion does not necessarily presuppose an intellectual, affective, or religious conversion. It would, however, definitely presuppose some significant level of affective and cognitive development.

But now a distinction has to be made, for it seems that the shift of criterion from satisfaction to value that constitutes moral conversion can be made critically or uncritically;[82] that is, one can *critically* recognize and accept the responsibility of discovering and critically establishing one's own values for oneself (in dialogue with one's community), or one may merely turn *uncritically* toward and accept a given set of values, be they given by parents, church, peers, "society," or whomever. Moral conversion in this second, uncritical sense seems to be a real enough conversion (from satisfaction to values), and it presupposes no intellectual conversion. Moral consciousness that is converted in this way sublates the empirical, intelligent, and rational levels of consciousness, but these levels as intellectually unconverted. The second or conventional level of Kohlberg's schema seems to illustrate this kind of uncritical concern for value quite well.

If, however, we add to the shift in criterion, as Lonergan does, "the

[78] Ibid. 241.

[79] Ibid. 243 and 267–68.

[80] Ibid. 240.

[81] Ibid.

[82] See *Conscience and Self-Transcendence* 530–37.

existential moment when we discover ... that it is up to each of us to decide for himself what he is to make of himself,"[83] a truly critical moral conversion seems implied; for this factor of existential discovery seems to presuppose at least what I would call an *implicit* intellectual (though not philosophical) conversion, that is, a subject's tacit but nevertheless real recognition and appropriation of himself or herself as the criterion of the real and the truly good in his or her own self-transcending judgments and choices of value.

In the fully explicit sense, Lonergan means by intellectual conversion a "radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth" that "knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what there is to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there now to be looked at."[84] "To be liberated from that blunder, to discover the self-transcendence proper to the human process of coming to know," says Lonergan, "is to break often long-ingrained habits of thought and speech. It is to acquire the mastery in one's own house that is to be had only when one knows precisely what one is doing when one is knowing."[85] But if intellectual conversion results in the elimination of the myth of naive realism, it seems to consist essentially in what Lonergan calls the "discovery of the self-transcendence proper to the human process of coming to know," the recognition and appropriation, in other words, of the radical dynamism and structure of one's own cognitive capacities and operations. We might note here parenthetically that if an insight into relativism is necessary, as Kohlberg indicates, in order to transcend the conventional level of moral judgment, an intellectual conversion such as we have just considered is necessary to transcend a sheer relativism through the discovery of realistic, objective judgment.

Such a differentiation between a critical and an uncritical moral conversion seems to be clearly justified in terms of Lonergan's own analysis of the basic structure of conscious operations; for moral conversion is basically a decision or choice on the fourth level of consciousness, a choice of value over satisfaction as criterion for decisions, and a choice of oneself as responsible. And this choice, like any other, is just as sound—no more, no less—as the understanding and judgment from which it proceeds and on which it depends. One's decisions are critical insofar as they proceed from reasonable judgment, authentic insofar as they

[83] *Method* 240. [84] Ibid. 238.

[85] Ibid. 239–40. As understood in this essay, intellectual conversion is a personally liberating and humbling experience which enables one to appreciate critically the validity and necessity of a variety of viewpoints in the *search* for truth; as such, it is the antithesis of a conceptual *possession* of *the* truth which one could use as a yardstick to measure the validity of other viewpoints.

conform to objective judgment. Thus a moral conversion proceeding from an intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation of one's own interiority is truly critical self-appropriation. Moral conversion as a mere shift in criterion for decision from satisfaction to value, on the other hand, lacks fundamental self-knowledge, and while adequate for getting along in untroubled times, is vulnerable to exploitation from every side, and, because its values are held uncritically, is like a ship with neither captain nor rudder during stormy times. The fact of the matter is that today the self-appropriation of a critical moral conversion is no luxury; it is a constitutive part of authentic human living.

Intellectual conversion is of great importance for making fundamental clarifications in fields like philosophy of science, philosophy of history, theological method, to name only a few, but its really crucial significance is to be found in the kind of personal, existential self-appropriation that we have been discussing—the appropriation of oneself as a free, responsible, and self-constituting originator of value who in his or her self-transcending judgments and choices is the criterion of the real and the truly good. And in this area, the basic realization, more than its technical philosophical expression, is of paramount importance; for the breakthrough that dispels the myth of knowing as taking a look and of reality as the already-out-there-now need be only as technical as the myth's own expression. In most people the myth is spontaneous and without technical articulation, so the conversion that overcomes it need not match in explanatory power and sophistication the philosophical position of, say, a Hume or a Kant. For most people, then, an intellectual conversion implicit within a fuller moral conversion would seem to be sufficient.

Indeed, moral conversion would seem to be not only a possible, but also a very natural and highly likely, context for such an implicit intellectual conversion; for, clearly, nothing is closer, more personal to the subject than his or her own decisions and choices, and thus the reflection, deliberation, and evaluation leading up to them. And if the choice is more important than the flavor of ice cream for tonight's dessert or of deeper personal concern than the model of a new automobile, the centrality of one's subjectivity can be exposed in a sometimes all too harsh fashion; for one finds it difficult to surround oneself with the defenses of "objective" criteria when one faces personal decisions about the military draft, aborting a fetus, or withholding the means of life from an incurably sick, elderly parent suffering unendurable pain; or when one decides on a spouse, or a career, or must choose between marriage and career. Because one does not want to decide or choose blindly, without reflection, one usually discovers sooner or later in one's attempts at intelligent and reasonable reflection that there are neither easy, simple answers to concrete questions of life and death nor a predetermined, easy-to-follow

program for one's life somewhere "out there" to be hit upon if only one looks long and hard enough. This discovery, what Lonergan calls an "inverse insight," that no prepackaged life-scripts or solutions to human problems exist, and that the pursuit of them leads one into the maze of endless blind alleys of unauthentic decisions, has the singular power of leading one to the positive discovery of oneself, in the authentic, self-transcending insights, judgments, decisions, and choices of one's own subjectivity, as the only truly objective source and criterion of human meaning and value. I must emphasize that this intellectual conversion is implicit *not* in the sense that one accidentally and almost without noticing falls upon it during the course of life, but in the sense that it occurs along with, within, and as part of a moral conversion upon which attention is focused. Insofar as this happens, the focal conversion is not simply a moral shift but also a critical self-appropriation. Such an implicit intellectual conversion forms an adequately critical ground for a full moral conversion whose shift in criteria for decisions will be to the appropriation of personally discovered and developed values rather than to an uncritical conformity with a moral code or set of values given by some external authority.

So, we have seen that while moral conversion taken simply in the sense of a shift to values as criterion of decision may be independent of and presuppose no intellectual conversion, the deeper critical moral conversion does involve intellectual conversion, either implicitly or explicitly.

What now about the relationship between moral conversion and affective (religious) conversion? I have already said that moral conversion presupposes some significant level of affective development, some serious degree of affective self-transcendence; for, indeed, values are apprehended in and through the intentional responses of feelings. But does moral conversion presuppose a genuine affective *conversion*? I would suggest that an affective conversion is not required for a moral conversion; but in saying this, I would want to recall Lonergan's point that moral conversion is not moral perfection. Moral conversion constitutes a fundamental challenge. And facing the challenge presented by moral conversion not only brings the meaning of personal responsibility into sharp focus; it also highlights in an intensely personal fashion the ideal of authentic human living—as well as the distance between it and one's present achievement. Thus moral conversion is not so much an end as a beginning, not so much an achievement as a call to commitment. For insofar as through conversion one realizes how drastically one's affective freedom is limited, one must commit oneself to the seemingly endless task of conquering the jungle of one's personal prejudices and biases, of developing one's knowledge of concrete human realities and possibilities, of scrutinizing one's intentional responses to values and their implicit scale of preferences, of

listening to criticism and protest, and of learning from others.[86]

The question becomes, then: If affective conversion is not necessary for moral conversion, is it necessary in order to meet with any measure of success the challenge of continued development which moral conversion issues? To this question, I suggest, the answer must be yes. For the challenge issued by moral conversion to the person who has discovered himself or herself as a responsible originator of value is a challenge which will be met in any serious and effective way only to the degree that that person has "fallen-in-love," only to the degree, as Lonergan puts it, that his or her being has become a being-in-love, a first principle of benevolence and beneficence, of honest collaboration and of true love, a transvaluated source from which flow "one's desires and fears, one's joys and sorrows, one's discernment of values, one's decisions and deeds."[87] Because there is no intrinsic limit to the depths of love into which one can fall, there is the unrestricted being-in-love of religious conversion, which is both an efficacious ground for the pursuit of a moral or truly human life and a completely new dimension of life of its own, a dimension of otherworldly fulfilment, joy, peace, and bliss rooted in the total love of God with all one's being.[88]

And when placed in the context of the reality of falling-in-love, of the affective conversion that transforms a subject into a being-in-love, the challenge and commitment to moral perfection that we have discussed here is to a perfection not for its own sake but for the sake of becoming a more authentic source of love dedicated to the ever greater realization of true value, especially the personal/communal values of peace and justice. This can be said, a fortiori, of religious conversion.

These are some perspectives, then, on the possible ways in which the intellectual, affective, and religious conversions can be understood to be related to moral conversion. I would like now, in concluding, to focus again on moral conversion, especially as I have distinguished it in its critical and uncritical forms; for I think that it is precisely the critical moral conversion of self-appropriation that constitutes the "self-knowledge" which Jacob Bronowski has pointed to as crucial in the question of the continued "ascent of man."

Critical moral conversion as the existential "discovery of oneself as a moral being, the realization that one not only chooses between courses of action but also thereby makes oneself an authentic human being or an unauthentic one,"[89] is fundamentally experienced as a challenge, as a call to a fully human, responsible life. And this is the challenge that Bronowski says confronts us in an especially acute form today at this extremely

[86] Ibid. 240.

[87] Ibid. 104–5.

[88] Ibid. 242.

[89] Ibid. 38.

precarious point in our ascent. At stake, as Bronowski puts it, is our "responsibility for the integrity of what we are as ethical creatures." An uncritical moral conversion, a fundamental choice of value over satisfaction as criterion of our decisions, may be a good start, but it is not enough in a day when contradictory "values" of every kind are extolled and enticingly proposed for our choice. Whether man's foot is going to come down pointing ahead on his next step really depends on the kind of choices we can make among these values. Will we allow other people to run the world for us while we ourselves "continue to live out of a ragbag of morals that come from past beliefs," or will we cast off our hand-me-down morality for a set of critically selected and personally chosen "custom-made" values? The question, in other words, is: Can we go beyond a moral conversion to values given within an orientation of "good-boy, nice-girl" approval and law-and-order maintenance, and move to a critical realization of ourselves as criteria of value in our own self-transcending judgments and decisions, and to the establishment of ourselves as responsible originators of value?

Neither Bronowski, nor Lonergan, nor anyone else can specify which concrete realization of values will contribute to the continuing "ascent of man." What Lonergan has done, it seems to me, is to transpose the question of value by redirecting our attention from a primary concern with this value and that value to the transcendental notion of value, to the personal source of all values in conscience as the radical drive of the human spirit for self-transcendence. And by insisting on the concrete particularity of the personal subject, Lonergan has not only shown the special relevance developmental psychology has for the question of value; he has also been able to highlight the way in which personal conversion is radically central to the question of value. And in all of this he has provided, really, the methodological justification for the recent attention on the part of many prominent ethicists not to rules, precepts, and law as primary, but to such ancient ethical categories as habits, virtues, and character, that is, to the "sort of person" one is.[90] For character, the personally shaped concretization of conscience, of the transcendental notion of value, is the ground of every value.

[90] See, e.g., James M. Gustafson, *Theology and Christian Ethics;* Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue* (Notre Dame: Fides, 1974) and *Character and the Christian Life* (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1975); Robert Johann, *Building the Human* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968); and Michael Novak, *The Experience of Nothingness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).