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Ecological Conversion: What Does it Mean?

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Abstract
This article interrogates the notion of ecological conversion through the lens of the four conversions suggested by Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran: religious, moral, intellectual, and psychic. It further dialogues with *Laudato Si'* to examine how the encyclical illustrates the usefulness of the four types of conversion in bringing out the full reality of ecological conversion.

Keywords
anthropocentrism, Robert M. Doran, ecological conversion, intellectual conversion, Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, Bernard Lonergan, moral conversion, psychic conversion, religious conversion'

The term "ecological conversion" has now fully entered into the lexicon of Catholic social teaching. Coined in Catholic circles by Pope John Paul II, the phrase refers to a significantly changed relationship to our natural environment.[1] However, the precise scope of this change, its implications and ramifications, remains

1. A commonly referenced source is Pope John Paul II, General Audience Address, (January 17, 2001), http://conservation.catholic.org/john_paul_ii.htm. (This and all other URLs herein were accessed March 2, 2016.) See also Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Gregis*,

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unclear. Faced with such a lack of precision, the danger is that the term could become a cipher into which various contents can be filled, contents which will not adequately allow humanity to avoid "the catastrophe toward which it [is] moving."[2] That danger has to some extent been alleviated with the publication of *Laudato Si'*.[3] The whole of this remarkable document can be read as a call for, and an exploration of, some of the meanings of ecological conversion, touching as it does on a range of issues that impinge on our relationship to the natural world. However, the pope's own direct handling of the term is fairly circumscribed to what we might call the religious, indeed Christian, dimension of such a conversion.[4] As with a number of the other themes that permeate the encyclical such as the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet or the conviction that everything is connected, it could be argued that what the pope has presented about ecological conversion is in need of further systematization to ensure that nothing important goes unheeded and the priorities of our actions are properly defined. What is needed is a more explanatory and analytic account of the full implications of ecological conversion, one that spells out in greater detail all that such a conversion requires and identifies the foundations on which such a conversion stands.

In order to achieve this we shall place the notion of ecological conversion within the general framework of the conversions identified by Bernard Lonergan and extended by Robert Doran. In his major work, *Method in Theology*, Lonergan identifies three distinct aspects of conversion as religious, moral, and intellectual.[5] In various works Doran has introduced the notion of psychic conversion as a distinct mode from those identified by Lonergan.[6] The major focus of this article will be to interrogate the notion of ecological conversion through the lens of these four conversions in order to provide

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(October 16, 2003), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20031016_pastores-gregis.html; and Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Our Relationship with the Environment: The Need for Conversion," 2008, http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/enviro_eng.pdf.

2. Ibid.
3. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*: *On Care for our Common Home,* (May 24, 2015), (hereafter cited in text as *LS*), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.
4. The explicit handling of the theme of ecological conversion occurs in six paragraphs (*LS* 216–21) in chap. 6 of the encyclical, within the larger theme of "Ecological Education and Spirituality."
5. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972). See also Bernard Lonergan, "Self-transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965–1980,* ed. Robert M. Doran and Robert C. Crocken (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005) 313–331.
6. Initially in Robert M. Doran, *Subject and Psyche*, 2nd ed., Marquette Studies in Theology 3 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University, 1994); Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences* (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981); and more fully in Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990).

an explanatory context for this increasingly global concern. We shall give a brief account of the four conversions found in the work of Lonergan and Doran before we move on to the interrogation of the notion of ecological conversion. In doing this we shall actively dialogue with *Laudato Si'*.

Conversion as Religious, Moral, Intellectual and Psychic

In *Method in Theology* Lonergan speaks of conversion as a "transformation of the subject and his world"; it is not just a "development or even a series of developments," but a "resultant change of course and direction. It is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away. There emerges something new that fructifies in inter-locking, cumulative sequences of developments on all levels and in all departments of human living."[7] Later in the same work he speaks of it as an "about-face; it comes out of the old by repudiating characteristic features; it begins a new sequence that can keep revealing ever greater depth and breadth and wealth. Such an about-face and new beginning is what is meant by a conversion."[8] Conversion is a radical shift of one's fundamental orientation, one's horizon, an ongoing process toward consistent self-transcendence and authenticity. Expanding on this Lonergan specifies three distinct types of conversion, which he identifies as intellectual, moral, and religious.

Intellectual conversion "is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge."[9] Of all the conversions Lonergan speaks of, this is perhaps the most difficult to attain and maintain. It is usually the outcome of a struggle with major philosophical works, especially Lonergan's own work, *Insight*.[10] Such a conversion is startling and disorienting as it undermines a sense of the stability of a reality "already out there now" to replace it with a reality known through intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation.[11] We can find an interesting historical example of such a shift in book 7 of Augustine's *Confessions*.[12] Lonergan himself suggests that intellectual conversion is relatively rare, though he views it as implicit in the dogmatic realism of the Christian doctrinal tradition.[13]

7. Lonergan, *Method* 130.
8. Ibid. 237–38.
9. Ibid. 238.
10. Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1992).
11. As Lonergan notes in *Insight*, "one has not made it yet if one has no clear memory of its startling strangeness" (22). While the term "intellectual conversion" does not occur in *Insight*, the whole work is directed to producing it.
12. See Neil Ormerod, "Intellectual Conversion in Book 7 of Augustine's *Confessions*," *Pacifica* 25 (2012) 12–22.
13. Lonergan, *Method* 243: "Among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion."

Moral conversion, on the other hand, "changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfactions to values."[14] Lonergan speaks of values in terms of the intentionality of feeling or affectivity. Still, intentional feelings may relate to the merely satisfying or to the truly good. Each of us is then faced with an existential challenge, to live merely for satisfaction or to orient ourselves to the genuinely good. "So we move to the existential moment when we discover for ourselves that our choosing affects ourselves no less than the chosen or rejected objects, and that it is up to each of us to decide for himself what he is to make of himself."[15] As orientated to the genuinely good, intentional responses to value are self-transcending. Moral conversion is an initiation into a life of moral authenticity rather than the attainment of moral perfection.[16] Part of that growth in authenticity is to grasp a hierarchical scale of values to which our feelings learn to respond. Lonergan speaks of this five-fold scale of values—vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious—as normative and transcultural. It is important to realize that this is a heuristic structure. Lonergan is not specifying a particular set of social or cultural values as transcultural; rather, he is specifying the relationship between the various types of values. While Lonergan mentions the scale of values almost in passing in *Method*, something of its full implications has been unpacked by Doran in his *Theology and Dialectics of History*.

Finally, Lonergan identifies *religious conversion* as "being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love, a total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations. But such a surrender is understood not as an act, but as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts."[17] Like all conversion, religious conversion is a process in which we move from ignoring the realm of the transcendent to living more deeply from within that realm. Lonergan goes on to speak of religious conversion in terms of God's love poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5) and of scholastic notions of operative grace.[18] Still, while drawing on these very Christian constructs to grasp the nature of religious conversion, he does not restrict the reality of religious conversion to Christians alone. People of other religious traditions and of none may experience such a radical transformation.

Though he distinguishes these three forms of conversion, Lonergan also relates them as distinct modalities of one process toward self-transcendence. And while he recognizes them as possibly occurring independently of one another, the normal sequence he posits is one which moves from religious to moral and then, more rarely, to intellectual conversion. Religious conversion contains the seeds of intellectual conversion inasmuch as a religious tradition is committed to the truth of doctrine, while moral conversion leads similarly to intellectual conversion through a commitment to the value of truth.[19] It is religious conversion that propels one to accept value as the

14. Ibid. 240.
15. Ibid.
16. As Lonergan notes, "authenticity is ever a withdrawal from unauthenticity." Ibid. 110.
17. Lonergan, *Method* 240.
18. Ibid. 241.
19. Ibid. 243.

criterion of decision-making and that transforms one's cognitional life toward pursuing truth and meaning for their own sake rather than for utilitarian purposes. On the other hand, intellectual conversion can ground a natural theology that affirms the reality of God, and a realism which allows for the objectivity of the realm of values, without slipping into relativism or emotivism.[20]

If intellectual conversion relates in some fashion to the objective of what Lonergan calls intellectual and rational consciousness, moral conversion does so to existential consciousness, and so too religious conversion to the *apex animae.* Finally in relation to the primordial flow from which all our existential and intellectual acts emerge, Doran's notion of *psychic conversion* is related to empirical consciousness's flow of image and affect as a distinctive dimension of consciousness present in all our intellectual and volitional acts. Drawing on Lonergan's notion of the pre-conscious censor, the function of our pre-conscious psyche that selects the images which are allowed to emerge into consciousness, Doran speaks of psychic conversion as the reorientation of the censor from a repressive role to a facilitative one in the search by conscious intentionality for meaning, truth, and goodness.[21] The psyche's participation in this search gives rise to the experience of beauty.

While each of these conversions may be moments in the narrative of one's life, cumulatively, they are components in a journey toward personal authenticity, as ever a withdrawal from unauthenticity.[22] They are each modalities of our human self-transcendence which seek to overcome the distortions of sin and bias within consciousness, while promoting and strengthening our basic orientation to meaning, truth, goodness, and love as the universal willingness for the good that is the result of God's grace in our lives.

The question we must now address is the meaning of the term ecological conversion. Is it a distinct modality of self-transcendence, as are the other forms of conversion we have considered? Or is it a complex reality whose component parts can be identified in terms of the four conversions described above? Our answer will lie in demonstrating the ways in which each of the four conversions considered above contributes to an ecological conversion that reorients our relationship to the natural world in a way that can assist humanity to avoid the most significant social breakdown of our time.

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20. See for example, Neil Ormerod, *A Public God: Natural Theology Reconsidered* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015).
21. On Lonergan's notion of the censor, drawn from his reading of Sigmund Freud, see *Insight* 214–20. On Doran's notion of psychic conversion, see *Theology and the Dialectics of History* 42–63.
22. See Robert Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by 'Conversion'?" (lecture, University of St Michael's College, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, July 15, 2011), http://www.lonerganresource.com/pdf/lectures/What%20Does%20 Bernard%20Lonergan%20 Mean%20by%20Conversion.pdf: "Basically, conversion is a shift of one's fundamental orientation, an about-face, from self-absorption or self-enclosure to self-transcendence in a particular domain of one's operations as a human being" (4).

Ecological Conversion and Religious Conversion

It is challenging to speak of religious conversion within a contemporary culture that tends to reject religion while granting some degree of consideration to personal spiritualities. Such rejection reflects a misunderstanding of religion. To understand religion, Lonergan begins with faith defined as "the knowledge born of religious love."[23] Religious love has to do with being in love in an unrestricted fashion. "Being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations."[24] Such unrestricted being in love is the true meaning of the word "religion." It points to a process of religious conversion that frees one from "radical lovelessness"; this process is the consequence of receiving God's unqualified love and responding to that gift of love by cooperating in the process that makes my own loving unconditional.[25]

What is entailed in this conversion from lovelessness to being in love? What are its consequences, especially for our human relationship to the natural world? Lonergan states the change in horizon this way:

> [Being in love with God] places all other values in the light and the shadow of transcendent value. In the shadow, for transcendent value is supreme and incomparable. In the light, for transcendent value links itself to all other values to transform, magnify, glorify them. Without faith the originating value is man and the terminal value is the human good man brings about. But in the light of faith, originating value is divine light and love, while terminal value is the whole universe. So the human good becomes absorbed in an all-encompassing good . . . Human development is not only in skills and virtues but also in holiness. The power of God's love brings forth a new energy and efficacy in all goodness, and the limit of human expectation ceases to be the grave.
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> To conceive God as originating value and the world as terminal value implies that God too is self-transcending and that the world is the fruit of [God's] self-transcendence, the expression and manifestation of [God's] benevolence and beneficence, [God's] glory. . . . [God] made us in [the divine] image, for our authenticity consists in being like [God], in self-transcending, in being origins of value, in true love . . .
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> [God] calls [us] to the higher authenticity that overcomes evil with good. So faith is linked with human progress and it has to meet the challenge of human decline . . . Faith places human efforts in a friendly universe; it reveals an ultimate significance in human achievement; it strengthens new undertakings with confidence . . . Most of all, faith has the power of undoing decline . . . It is not propaganda and it is not argument but religious faith that will

23. Lonergan, *Method* 115.
24. Ibid. 105–6.
25. Lonergan makes clear that it is possible to be in a state of being in love with God without realizing that one is in such a state, or without realizing that this state is, in fact, being in love with God. In other words, the state of being in love with God can be conscious without being known. Probably, for most people, it becomes known because of revelation, a word that God makes available, usually through the mediation of a community.

> liberate human reasonableness from its ideological prisons . . . Human possessiveness and human pride have to be replaced by religious charity, by the charity of the suffering servant, by self-sacrificing love.[26]

It is possible now to argue that Lonergan's notion of religious conversion can make a significant contribution to understanding the meaning of ecological conversion. Being in love with God opens up the possibility not only of loving God, but of loving *all* that God loves, and loving *as* God loves. Our human loving has the potential to become unconditional. Ecological conversion pushes the boundaries of that unconditionality to include the whole universe. "But in the light of faith, originating value is divine light and love, *while terminal value is the whole universe*. So the human good becomes sublated within an all-encompassing good."[27]

The Jewish and Christian communities understand God's self-transcendence as the ground of the relation of love between Creator and created. God creates all that exists and loves all that God has created.[28] All that is created is regarded as good precisely because it is created by God. This belief grounds the Christian principle of sacramentality which states that all of creation has the potential to reveal God's presence. This principle is most evident in the sacrament of the Eucharist wherein the "fruits of the earth," bread and wine, are transformed into the presence of Christ to the community. This sacrament requires our connection to the living biosphere for its very celebration.[29] As religious, then, ecological conversion is the recognition of the sacredness of creation. It contextualizes all human actions within a friendly and meaningful universe.

Ecological conversion as religious also invites us to greater intimacy with the natural world, to the establishment of the kind of covenant relationship that God is described as establishing with the whole of creation in Genesis 9:1–7. Such covenantal relationship is only possible if there is relationship with the natural world, and relationship requires ongoing attentiveness to the natural world with which our human lives are intertwined.

Furthermore, religious conversion that grounds greater self-transcendence and authenticity both challenges and empowers human beings to be willing to undergo the sacrifices needed to change their ways of living, their patterns of production and

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26. Lonergan, *Method* 116–17. See Robert Doran's article, "What does Bernard Lonergan Mean by 'Conversion'?" where he points out the significance of what Lonergan says here.
27. Lonergan, *Method* 116, emphasis added.
28. See Genesis 1:10: "And God saw that it was good"; Wisdom 11:25–26: "You love all that exists . . . all things are yours, God, lover of life" (NAB, used throughout). Theologically this is a consequence of *creatio ex nihilo*, that God creates without preconditions, but solely out of love for the created order. See also the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative, "You Love All That Exists . . . All Things Are Yours, God, Lover of Life," http://www.cccb.ca/site/Files/pastoralenvironment.pdf.
29. Denis Edwards, "Celebrating Eucharist in a Time of Global Climate Change," *Pacifica* 19 (2006) 1–15.

consumption, for the sake of the greater good for all that exists.[30] It calls us to the ongoing process of overcoming evil with good, of meeting the consequences and impact on the natural world of human decline as these are manifest in environmental destruction. It is religious conversion, and the faith and hope that emerge from such conversion, that will help us to continually move beyond our human self-absorption and pride in order to make the moral decisions about our human being and doing that will contribute to the healing of the earth.

In fact, *Laudato Si'* offers a poignant example of the needed loving intimacy with the natural world in St. Francis of Assisi whom Pope Francis regards as the model of "the inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace" (*LS* 10). For St. Francis, "each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection" (*LS* 11). This is not a naïve romanticism but a way of living that can "take us to the heart of what it is to be human" (*LS* 11). For Pope Francis:

> If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters . . . By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. (*LS* 11)

To emphasize the depth of universal communion and intimacy that he has in mind, Pope Francis reiterates what he said in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement" (*LS* 89).[31]

On the other hand, *Laudato Si'*s most explicit handling of the theme of ecological conversion focuses most of all on a religious reading of its meaning. The section entitled "Ecological Conversion" (*LS* 216–21) is placed within a specifically Christian context "whereby the effects of [people's] encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them" (*LS* 217). Nonetheless the expansive scope —"with the world around them"—must be viewed as encompassing what we have placed below under the headings of moral, intellectual, and psychic conversion. The pope is concerned with the need for "a spirituality capable of inspiring us" (*LS* 216) to face and respond to environmental challenges, which are "not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us" (*LS* 216). Such a conversion entails "the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire

30. Lonergan, *Method* 55: "Finally, we may note that a religion that promotes self-transcendence to the point, not merely of justice, but of self-sacrificing love, will have a redemptive role in human society inasmuch as such love can undo the mischief of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress."

31. See reference in footnote 67 to Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (November 24, 2013), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

to change" (*LS* 218) and "a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion" (*LS* 220). There is a sense in which Pope Francis is simply, yet profoundly, asking people to live out their Christian vocation: "I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion" (*LS* 221).

Our account of ecological conversion seeks to extend the notion in two ways: first to move it beyond the realm of explicitly Christian conversion into the more general realm of religious conversion as explicated by Lonergan. This gives the notion of ecological conversion greater potential for use within an interfaith context. Second, we seek to move it beyond the specifically religious context in order to unfold the implications of our relationship "with the world around" us, of being a human world brimming with moral decision-making, intellectual achievement, and psychic vitality, that is interconnected with the whole biosphere of our planet.

Ecological Conversion and Moral Conversion

In many ways moral conversion may contribute most significantly to a robust understanding of the many implications of ecological conversion. The presenting problem that ecological conversion is seeking to address (environmental degradation) arises primarily from human decisions, and these decisions are either informed by values, or fall back onto mere satisfactions, to the detriment of human as well as other-than-human flourishing. The present environmental destruction is the end product of generations of decisions based on a failure to attend to the ecological impact of those decisions, either initially through ignorance, or, as evidence of that impact has accumulated, willfully and maliciously. To choose satisfactions over genuine values is to choose without question what has gone before, to continue in patterns of routine and comfort, even in the face of mounting evidence that doing so is destroying our delicate ecological balance upon which human life depends.

To better understand the relationship between moral conversion and ecological conversion we can break down the implications of ecological conversion through attending to the ecological aspects of the scale of values.[32] This will increase our apprehension of the depth of damage done through failures in ecological conversion, and also identify more clearly the different levels of action needed in the task of making ourselves through our making of the world.

Vital Values

Lonergan speaks of vital values as the "health and strength, grace and vigor, [that] normally are preferred to avoiding the work, privations, pains involved in acquiring,

32. For a larger theological justification for such a move see Neil Ormerod, "The Grace–Nature Distinction and the Construction of a Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 75 (2014) 515–36.

maintaining, restoring them."[33] When we consider the current state of environmental damage done to the ecosphere we can easily identify its impact upon vital values in two ways.

At a global level, environmental damage is having a major impact on the vital values of people, particularly through climate change but also through such practices as the shifting of toxic waste "offshore" to third world countries. Shifting weather patterns are negatively affecting global food production as climate-sensitive crops are no longer producing the yields needed to sustain populations. Increased weather variability, changing rain and storm patterns, increased cyclonic events, and droughts are seriously influencing the ability of nations to produce needed food. Dumped toxic materials find their ways into water tables, leading to health problems for those least able to protect themselves—the young, the elderly, and the infirm.

Still, while the world's poorest peoples suffer the impact of climate-induced environmental damage in a major way, the toxic overload (for example bioaccumulation) due to our global patterns of production and consumption impinges on us all. Each year our processes of production generate huge quantities of toxic byproducts; meanwhile, with some level of eventuality, the direct products of that production end up in our landfills as consumer disposables. Currently our oceans contain solid islands of plastic waste which, as it breaks down, ends up in the food chain of sea creatures, to unknown effect. The salutary lesson of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* concerning the bioaccumulation of toxic materials up the food chain has been lost or forgotten.[34]

In terms that Lonergan would use, the stability of multiple schemes of recurrence that constitute our global ecology are being threatened by both shifts in climate and the introduction of toxic chemicals, both of which will shift the various probabilities of those schemes in complex and unpredictable ways.[35] Our global ecology has a certain probability of emergence and a probability of survival. It can break down in significant ways and, if so, the consequences for the human race as a whole are unpredictable and possibly catastrophic. Put simply, a sick planetary ecology creates a sick people, undernourished, prone to illness, and carrying a toxic load that undermines the very possibility of vital flourishing. Our vital well-being is inextricably linked to the well-being of the whole planet.

Of course there are actions individuals can take to seek to maintain their own vitality in the face of these problems. One can adopt patterns of healthy living, be cautious about one's patterns of consumption, undertake regular health checks, and so on.

33. Lonergan, *Method* 31.
34. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 40th anniversary ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002). There are fierce debates over the value of Carson's work and the danger that the bioaccumulation of DDT in the food chain presents. On one side there are those who argue that the banning of DDT robbed the world of a cheap and effective insecticide against mosquito-borne diseases; on the other hand, ever new concerns about the potential impact of bioaccumulation in humans is emerging with studies linking DDT to soft-tissue cancers.
35. On schemes of recurrence and their probabilities of emergence and survival, see Lonergan, *Insight* 138–51.

However, none of these effectively addresses the recurrent problem arising from globally occurring technological, economic, and political actions. As Doran notes, problems at the lower level of values need higher-level actions to be effectively remedied.

Laudato Si' repeatedly draws our attention to the question of vital values, most notably in sections 20–52, but also in its calls to attend to the impact of environmental destruction on the world's poor. It mentions pollution and climate change which produce "a broad spectrum of health hazards, especially for the poor, and [cause] millions of premature deaths" (*LS* 20). Pope Francis specifically mentions the issue of bioaccumulation of toxins in the food chain and their impact on health (*LS* 21). Climate change threatens the poor's "means of subsistence" as well as animal and plant species that "cannot adapt" (*LS* 25). The importance of fresh drinking water receives special attention (*LS* 27–31), noting that "access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right" (*LS* 30). And it is not just a question of the vital values of human beings; the loss of the biodiversity of the entire ecosphere (*LS* 32–42) impacts us all "because all creatures are connected [and] each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another" (*LS* 42). Pope Francis is calling on us to hear "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (*LS* 49) as both are suffering in their basic vitality as a result of our over-consumption.

Social Values

For Lonergan, social values concern "the good of order which conditions the vital values of the whole community."[36] This good of order has distinctive technological, economic, and political aspects, each of which contributes in different ways to both actual ecological destruction, as well as to the possibility of ecological regeneration. The good of order is itself dependent on the proper functioning of the vitality of the ecosphere, the vitality of which is necessary for the regular production of food and for the provision of an ongoing livable environment. If there is not a regular supply of food and if people are living in a generally toxic environment, it is a sign that globally the good of order has broken down. If the social order is to condition "the vital values of the whole community," moral conversion must encompass ecological concerns, just as the needed environmental awareness requires moral conversion.

Commitment to the good of order arising from moral conversion therefore requires that we attend to the environmental impacts of our technologies, our economic processes, and our political policies, inasmuch as these affect our global ecology both positively and negatively. We need to support technological innovations that have a lower level of environmental impact, for example renewable energy, and turn away from those which are detrimental in their impact, for example, continued reliance on fossil fuels. We also need to question economies of planned obsolescence and overconsumption, while supporting "cradle to grave" accounting systems that incorporate the total cost of production and disposal of consumer goods into the final price of those

36. Lonergan, *Method* 31.

goods.[37] Moral conversion may mean withdrawing investment in technologies that are known to be harmful to the environment even though they offer good returns in the short term.[38] Politically, it will mean supporting and working for political policies aimed at environmental protection, at shifting our economies away from current destructive practices, and promoting technologies that are less harmful and even positively beneficial to the environment.[39] For example, current political policies globally provide massive subsidies to fossil fuel companies to continue their explorations for new sources of fuels when the production of current reserves of these fossil fuels already threatens the planet with unsustainable levels of greenhouse gas emissions. These subsidies not only distort economic process and damage the environment; they also foster an anti-democratic symbiotic relationship between the fossil fuel industry and political processes through the massive lobbying of governments by the industry.[40]

We can see from these few examples that moral conversion to the good of the social order offers a rich area of consideration in relation to the notion of ecological conversion. The ecological implications of moral conversion are concrete, practical, and urgent, and demand political action to address the "the catastrophe toward which [we are] moving."[41] On the other hand, conversion to the good of order as social, important though it is, clearly does not exhaust all that is implied in ecological conversion. The cultural order supervenes upon the social order to supply the meanings and values that help us make sense of our living. Cultural values, too, have a role to play in an adequate understanding of the implications of ecological conversion.

Pope Francis reserves some of his sharpest criticism for the distortions of social values that are destroying our environment. In the early part of the encyclical, when outlining the extent of the problem, he highlights the level of social decline we experience as a result of our failures to attend to the environment:

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37. For a classic early study of planned obsolescence see Vance Oakley Packard, *The Waste Makers* (New York: D. McKay, 1960).
38. We would note here campaigns to divest from fossil fuels orchestrated by 350.org.
39. See "Appeal to COP 21 Negotiating Parties," (October 25, 2015), issued by cardinals, patriarchs, and bishops from across the globe. It is addressed to those negotiating the COP21 in Paris, calling on them "to work toward the approval of a fair, legally binding and truly transformational climate agreement," and offering a ten-point policy proposal that includes "a goal for complete decarbonisation by mid-century." See "Appeal," 1, http://www.comece.eu/dl/KkOMJKJOnOoJqx4KJK/APPEAL_TO_COP_21_English.pdf
40. It has been reported that fossil fuel companies are spending over $400,000 per day to lobby the US government to prevent legislation to reduce carbon emissions. See "Oil & Gas," OpenSecrets.Org, http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?cycle=2014&ind=E01. They have also secured large government subsidies for their businesses, around $1.5 billion globally per day, according to the International Energy Agency.
41. Pope John Paul II, General Audience Address, January 17, 2001.

> Many cities . . . have become unhealthy to live in, not only because of pollution caused by toxic emissions but also as a result of urban chaos, poor transportation, and visual pollution and noise. Many cities are huge, inefficient structures, excessively wasteful of energy and water. Neighborhoods, even those recently built, are congested, chaotic and lacking in sufficient green space. We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature. (*LS* 44)

For these symptoms of our neglect of the environment, he points the finger of blame at our technological, economic, and political systems, particularly the ways in which the political order is dominated by the technological and economic orders. Technology is developed and deployed in disregard of its environmental and human impact, turning us into replaceable cogs in the economic machine. This undermines the dignity of human work. Economically we have failed to provide the basic necessities for the world's poor, while the wealthy live lives of hyper-consumption.

On the plus side he acknowledges the positive action of institutions and movements that have acted to protect the environment and the political successes in areas such as endangered species and the elimination of CFCs from the atmosphere. In spite of this, significant distortions are still operating at the social level that contribute in a major way to the environmental crisis, specifically the "alliance between the economy and technology [that] ends up sidelining anything unrelated to its immediate interests" (*LS* 54). More fully,

> The failure of global summits on the environment makes it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected. (*LS* 54)

Rather than regulating our technological and economic progress to help balance the social dialectic, the political dimension is constantly being subordinated to economic interests and driven by inherently ambiguous technological developments. "Technology, which, linked to business interests, is presented as the only way of solving these problems, in fact proves incapable of seeing the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others" (*LS* 20).

Pope Francis is particularly scathing about the failures of the political order to deal with the looming crisis of climate change. "Politics and business have been slow to react in a way commensurate with the urgency of the challenges facing our world" (*LS* 165). In relation to climate change, various international accords have been "poorly implemented" (*LS* 167) and "the advances have been regrettably few" (*LS* 169). These problems can only be properly confronted through "stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions . . . empowered to impose sanctions" (*LS* 175).[42]

42. Note that the encyclical was issued in June 2015 in the hope that it would contribute to the COP 21 negotiations taking place in Paris, November 30–December 11, 2015. See also "Appeal to COP 21 Negotiating Parties."

Cultural Values

As Lonergan notes, "over and above mere living and operating, men have to find meaning and value in their living and operation."[43] In a significant enrichment of the notion of cultural values, Doran has incorporated insights from Eric Voegelin in relation to three distinct cultural types: cosmological, anthropological, and soteriological.[44] Doran considers the first two, cosmological and anthropological, as possessing a both/and dialectic structure, while he considers the function of the third type, soteriological, to be the maintenance of the tension between the other two poles of the dialectic. Cosmological culture draws meaning and value from the natural rhythms of the cosmos, the cycles of nature, and a cosmic hierarchy of being. It locates individuals through placing them within a preexisting social order, understood as mirroring the cosmic or heavenly order. This type is most closely approximated in various indigenous cultures of the world (First Nation peoples around the world) as well as more recent agrarian social orders. We find vestiges of cosmological culture in our religious celebrations of Easter (spring fertility) and Christmas (the winter solstice).

Anthropological culture draws its meanings and values from a world-transcendent source of reason, reflected in the reason of the individual. Individuals, then, must conform themselves to this transcendent reason, and society is supposed to conform itself to the demands of paradigmatically rational individuals. We find the emergence of anthropological culture with the beginnings of Greek philosophy, on the one hand, and in the Old Testament prophetic demands on conscience, on the other. However, the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment critique of traditional forms of knowing have led to the predominance of the anthropological cultural type over the cosmological in Western thinking. Cosmological cultural meanings and values are now not just neglected, they are derided. The taut dialectical tension of the cultural dialectic has been broken in favor of anthropological cultural meanings and values.

This has resulted in what might be called a hyper-anthropological culture, one cut off from cosmological meanings and values. Symptomatic of this breakdown is the denigration of primal cultures that remain living witnesses to those cosmological meanings and values. Another sign of breakdown is our cultural alienation from the rhythms and cycles of nature, so that the natural world is seen simply as a point of extraction (mining, agribusiness) and a site for dumping our waste. Significantly, we can draw attention to the ways in which those who seek to defend the environment are attracted to these cosmological meanings and values as an alternative to the dominant anthropological culture of the West.[45] Surely, this recovery of cosmological meanings

43. Lonergan *Method* 32.

44. See Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*; and Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1952).

45. We find this for example in the writings of David Suzuki, such as David T. Suzuki and Peter Knudtson, *Wisdom of the Elders: Honoring Sacred Native Visions of Nature* (New York: Bantam, 1992); David T. Suzuki, Holly Jewell Dressel, and David Suzuki Foundation, *From Naked Ape to Superspecies: Humanity and the Global Eco-Crisis*, rev.

and values is an important corrective to the hyper-anthropological culture currently dominant in the West. Nonetheless to regard the wholesale adoption of such values as a solution to our environmental crisis would be a return to a less differentiated form of cultural existence.[46] As Doran argues, the maintenance of the integrity of the cultural dialectic requires input from soteriological culture, whereby divine meanings and values restore the integrity of the cultural dialectic.

The morally converted subject is a cultural agent enabled to take responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the cultural dialectic. This will require not just the promotion of cosmological meanings and values but correcting the distortions present within our hyper-anthropological culture; not just the valuing of primal cultures, but healing the distorted instrumentalized accounts of reason prevalent in our culture. Again these comments are not meant as comprehensive but as suggestive of the implications of our apprehension of cultural values for ecological conversion.

One of the more striking features of the encyclical is the attention it gives to the cultural dimensions of the environmental problem. Pope Francis identifies what he calls the technocratic, technological, or techno-economic paradigm characterized by "the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society" (*LS* 107). This technocratic culture ends up "conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities" (*LS* 107) and "tends to dominate economic and political life" (*LS* 109). It seduces us "to believe that [we] are free as long as [we] have the supposed freedom to consume" (*LS* 203). Such a culture shapes our thinking and imagination to the extent that we begin to see our world as a giant machine, where people become interchangeable cogs within that machine. This culture underpins a "Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about" (*LS* 116). Pope Francis labels this culture as excessively anthropocentric.

As opposed to this he refers to various indigenous cultures for whom "land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values" (*LS* 146). These cultures seek "to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land" (*LS* 179). In opposition to the dominant anthropocentric culture Pope Francis proposes a new ecological culture as "a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm" (*LS* 111). All of this

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ed. (Vancouver: Greystone, 2004). This is one reason why environmental movements are often labeled "neo-pagan" by conservative religious critics. Cosmological meanings and values are indeed found in "pagan" cultures which were closer to nature, agrarian, and attuned to cosmic rhythms.

46. Hence the warnings about neo-paganism one sometimes reads in papal references to the environmental groups. Pope Francis does not use the loaded language of neo-paganism, though he expresses concern about "biocentrism." See *LS* 118.

requires a "cultural revolution" in order to "to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur" (*LS* 114). Again the underlying theme for such an ecological culture is that "everything is interconnected."

Personal Values

For Lonergan, personal value "is the person in his self-transcendence, as loving and being loved, as originator of values in himself and in his milieu, as an inspiration and invitation to others to do likewise."[47] In the end it is the self-transcending person who must commit herself to the importance of ecological sustainability, of protecting our common home even though this may involve self-sacrifice in terms of lifestyle and life-options. As moral, ecological conversion requires consistency between our knowing and our doing, between knowing the environmental damage being done and the actions we need to take to diminish our personal contribution to that damage. We must commit to living in an environmentally responsible manner and this will affect the whole range of our living: our food choices, travel options, forms of housing, patterns of energy consumption, and so on. Ecologically converted persons need to make these changes and sacrifices so as to become an "inspiration and invitation to others to do likewise." They will develop a set of ecological virtues, patterns of life designed to lessen their damaging footprints upon the planet, which embody the values inherent in ecological conversion.

A shift from identifying problems towards generating some solutions occurs in the encyclical's handling of the question of personal values. In the opening sections of the encyclical, Pope Francis clearly links the problem of environmental destruction with the "violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin" (*LS* 2). This violence is "reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life [so that] the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she 'groans in travail'" (*LS* 2). With the Orthodox patriarch Bartholomew, he calls this destruction sin, "sin against ourselves and a sin against God" (*LS* 8). Still most of the analysis of the encyclical is concerned with the social and cultural causes of the problem.

When it comes to finding solutions Pope Francis focuses on the need to cultivate "ecological virtues" (*LS* 88). In fact, "Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment" (*LS* 211). He lists a number of simple habits of the heart, "such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights" (*LS* 211), each of which manifests a certain "nobility in the duty to care for creation" (*LS* 211). He insists that "we must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world" (*LS* 212). They "can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is

47. Lonergan, *Method* 33.

worthwhile" (*LS* 212). However, this will not be enough to avert environmental destruction: "Nevertheless, self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation facing our world today" (*LS* 219).

Moral conversion provides a rich framework for reflection on the issues to be negotiated by ecological conversion. Through the scale of values it helps us unpack a range of ecological implications that confront the morally converted subject. Nonetheless, without religious conversion one cannot sustain a morally converted life, and so religious conversion sets the conditions for moral conversion.[48] However, as we shall now argue, intellectual conversion is also indispensable for unpacking the full range of implications of ecological conversion and assists in grounding various aspects of moral conversion.

Ecological Conversion and Intellectual Conversion

Intellectual conversion involves a shift in our criteria for knowing, from "taking a good look" to the intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation of the real. This position involves not only a self-knowledge of one's cognitional operations, but a follow-through into the epistemological and metaphysical implications of such self-knowledge. While not as directly implicated in the issue of ecological conversion as moral conversion, it does have a contribution to make to the discussion of the full meaning of ecological conversion.

First, intellectual conversion helps support moral conversion by allowing us to understand and affirm the full reality of values. This is a general point, but it should not be lost. The scale of values itself provides an intelligible heuristic structure which we can affirm in a reasonable judgment consequent to our moral conversion. Without intellectual conversion, it is difficult to affirm the "objectivity" of values without which our commitments are likely to become viewed merely as matters of arbitrary personal preference. Ecological conversion would then be reduced to just another "lifestyle option" rather than a matter of a fundamental and intellectually honest moral commitment.

Second, intellectual conversion facilitates the shift from descriptive to explanatory knowing. The self-knowledge at the heart of intellectual conversion is itself explanatory, inasmuch as it is constituted by a shift from common-sense apprehensions of the relations of things to us to the much more differentiated understanding of the relation of things to one another.[49] Ecological conversion remains nominal without a verifiable understanding of the interconnection of things in relation to other things. It demands moving beyond common-sense knowing which is inadequate to the complexity of all the realities involved, since it is

48. At the end of his discussion of the human good in *Method*, Lonergan notes that a religion that helps human beings to develop their authenticity and self-transcendence "to the point, not merely of justice, but of self-sacrificing love," can help to bring about healing in society (55).

49. Lonergan, *Insight* 55–67, 102–5.

incapable of subjecting the multiple and interconnected schemes of recurrence which comprise our ecosphere to theoretical analysis and synthesis. Explanatory knowing recognizes that these schemes have a probability of survival which is less than one, that they are not necessary but highly contingent, and that they are always liable to deformation and even destruction in complex and subtle ways. In relation to the climate debate, for example, the shift from descriptive to explanatory knowing is important in recognizing that the common-sense experience of weather does not equate to an explanatory account of climate.[50]

Third, intellectual conversion can contribute to the currently intense debates concerning the role and nature of science, which have arisen in relation to the overall debate over climate change. In particular, from the perspective of intellectual conversion, the objectivity of science lies not in deploying the data and taking a good look, nor in the insights and judgments of individuals, but in the communal self-correcting process of learning with its mix of immanently generated knowledge and reasonable belief in the results of others.[51] It is fair to say that the scientific community has generally been caught unprepared for the politicization of the debate over climate change, unable to provide a clear account of its role and nature that could counter the charges of political bias it now must face. Intellectual conversion, with its clear understanding of the nature of objectivity, including scientific objectivity, can assist in this process.

Fourth, intellectual conversion is essential for the healing of the distortions present in our hyper-anthropological culture. While this culture prizes reason, because it has been cut off from its cosmological roots, reason has been all too simply instrumentalized and understood in terms of domination and exploitation of the natural order. Current reactions to this distortion, such as postmodernity which calls reason itself into question, and the recovery of cosmological meanings and values, which, while an important corrective of the cultural dialectic, does not address directly the distorted modern accounts of reason, are insufficient to the task of reorienting our understanding of understanding as promoted by intellectual conversion.

The significance of intellectual conversion in relation to *Laudato Si'* can best be found in Pope Francis's discussion of the role of science. There is a certain tension in his handling of this question. On the one hand, he clearly wants to promote a sense of dialogue and complementarity between science and religion: "Science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both" (*LS* 62). Science is particularly significant in uncovering the causes of climate change (*LS* 23). On the other hand, he seems to regard science and its associated epistemology to be implicated in the technological paradigm that is a root cause of our environmental problems: "It can be said that many problems of today's world stem from the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and

50. And so local experiences of cold winters, as have occurred recently in north-eastern areas of North America, do not provide counter-evidence to global warming.

51. On the self-correcting process of learning see Lonergan, *Insight* 308–12. On the reasonableness of belief see ibid. 725–40. See also *Method* 41–47.

aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society" (*LS* 107). The tension here is between a *normative* understanding of science, whose goal is complete explanation of the empirical data,[52] and an *empirical* account of the present practice of science such that its goal is not complete understanding but domination and control—a theme stressed in the early work of Jürgen Habermas.[53] Inasmuch as the goals of control and domination are ascendant, the proper goal of complete understanding is truncated, and science promotes practices without a proper awareness of their consequences in the ecological order. Intellectual conversion can assist in clarifying the distinction between a normative understanding of science and its current empirical distortions.

Lonergan realizes that intellectual conversion is probably a rare occurrence; and we acknowledge that its contribution to ecological conversion would lie less in the social and political arena and more as a resource that can resolve some of the underlying cultural issues that weaken or undermine our ability to respond to environmental concerns. While moral conversion may lead us to be cultural change agents, intellectual conversion provides a cultural diagnosis and therapy for cultural distortions. Again these suggestions are not intended as comprehensive, but as indications of intellectual conversion's possible contribution to an understanding of ecological conversion.

Ecological Conversion and Psychic Conversion

As Doran notes, we are conscious in two ways: one is the major focus of Lonergan's work, namely, our conscious inquiry into the data of our experience as we seek to understand it, weighing the evidence as we determine if our understanding is correct, making judgments, raising questions for deliberation, and making decisions that lead to actions. The other way of being conscious has to do with the "sensitive stream of consciousness itself."[54] The psyche refers to the sensations, memories, images, and so on that accompany our experiencing, understanding, deliberating, and deciding so that there is an affective dimension to our asking and answering questions about our experience; and when our questions are answered satisfactorily, the change we consciously experience is both intellectual and affective.

However, we can lose touch with this psychic flow, "the pulsing flow of life, the movement of life."[55] Moreover, there can also be obstacles to performing the intentional operations that arise from the sensitive stream of consciousness itself. For example, we can be hampered by the psychic censorship of the images we need to answer our questions for direct or reflective acts of insight. Further, we can experience internal resistance to even asking relevant questions. Such resistance can arise from

52. Lonergan, *Insight* 107–9.
53. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, 2nd ed. (London: Heinemann Educational, 1978).
54. Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by 'Conversion'?" 20.
55. Ibid. 6.

sensations, images, desires, fears, joys, but also from the individual, group, and general biases that need to be overcome by moral and/or intellectual conversion.

Psychic conversion regards the process of establishing the connections between the two ways of being conscious, a connection all too easily lost and difficult to recover once we have lost it. "The reason for establishing or re-establishing that connection, in terms of authenticity, is that affective self-transcendence is frequently required if we are going to be self-transcendent in the intellectual, moral, and religious dimensions of our living."[56]

On the psychic level of the ecological crisis, we are alienated from the rhythms and flows of the natural world. We have lost the connections between these rhythms and flows and how we operate in the intellectual, moral, and religious realms. Our alienation from the natural world becomes evident in the mechanistic imaging of the natural world so ingrained in the Western psyche. Both we and the earth pay a price for this deep-seated alienation. At this level, then, the ongoing process of ecological conversion as psychic is from alienation to a deepening relationship with the rhythms of the natural world, with other beings with whom we share this planet, not to mention with the beauty, awe, and immensity of the story of an unfolding 13.4 billion-year-old universe. Consequently, ecological conversion as psychic has to do, in the first instance, with recognizing the impact upon our own psyches of the mechanistic image which profoundly affects how we relate to the natural world, and especially the extent to which we regard the natural world as a machine made up of a diversity of parts, each of which we treat instrumentally.

Ecological conversion as psychic also involves ongoing attentiveness to what we habitually disregard and what we are likely to pay attention to. Our alienation from the natural world is so extensive that we are not even aware that we are alienated. Work is emerging on the impact on human development due to our deep disconnection from the natural world. One can consider, for example, Richard Louv's writing about nature-deficit disorder in our children.[57] Thomas Berry also writes extensively about the impact of alienation on all aspects of Western culture, especially on the lives of our children: "For children to live only in contact with concrete and steel and wires and wheels and machines and computers and plastics, to seldom experience any primordial reality or even to see the stars at night, is a soul deprivation that diminishes the deepest of their human experiences."[58]

Contemporary nature writers are helpful guides for teaching us how to reconnect with the natural world, how to develop our capacity for intimate communion and relationship. A consistent theme in their writing is the need for human beings to develop the capacity to pay attention. In his book, *Crow Country*, Mark Crocker remarks that although we share our lives with so many different species of birds and animals, we tend to ignore them because they function as a mere backdrop to the human living that

56. Ibid.
57. Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2008).
58. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999) 82.

we think really matters. But this disregard for the natural world affects our ability to know fully who we are and to make adequate decisions about our living. Such a limited self-knowledge is part of the dramatic bias that contributes to ecological decline.

In her evaluation of nature writing, Madeleine Bunting of *The Guardian* emphasizes how this writing teaches us that "we need that attentiveness to nature to understand our humanity, and of how we fit, as just one species, into a vast reach of time and space."[59] Thomas Lowe Fleischner, editor of *The Way of Natural History*, affirms that point that "'natural history' is the practice of intentional, focused attentiveness and receptivity to the more-than-human world . . . Attention is prerequisite to intimacy. Natural history, then, is a means of becoming intimate with the . . . world."[60] He argues that attentiveness to nature matters because, "in a fundamental sense, we are what we pay attention to . . . Our attention is precious, and what we choose to focus it on has enormous consequences. What we choose to look at, and to listen to—these choices change the world."[61]

Similarly, Lyanda Lynn Haupt explains what this need for attentiveness to the natural world means for those who live in urban contexts. As she reminds us, we can be connected to the natural world in and through our everyday lives, as we walk the paths of our neighborhoods and begin to attend to our human and other-than-human neighbors, "on and off the concrete, above and below the soil."[62] She insists that we have to overcome the lack of connection between our daily living, which we think has nothing to do with nature, and wilderness that we mistake for "true" nature. In contrast, she points out that

> it is in our everyday lives, in our everyday homes, that we eat, consume energy, run the faucet, compost, flush, learn, and *live*. It is here, *in our lives*, that we must come to know our essential connection to the wilder earth, because it is here, in the activity of our daily lives, that we most surely affect this earth, for good or for ill.[63]

Haupt's own attention to the crows in her neighborhood led her to a hope "that we can learn another kind of attention that is deeper, wider, more creative, more native, more difficult, and far more beautiful."[64] Such attention is a critical way to overcome alienation and reestablish connections between our psyches and our intellectual and moral operations. To the degree that we can be deeply attentive to the natural world,

59. Madeleine Bunting, *The Guardian*, July 30, 2007, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/jul/30/comment.bookscomment.
60. Thomas Lowe Fleischner, "The Mindfulness of Natural History," in *The Way of Natural History*, ed. Thomas Lowe Fleischner (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University) 3–15 at 5–6.
61. Ibid. 9.
62. Lyanda Lynn Haupt, *Crow Planet: Essential Wisdom for Urban Wilderness* (New York: Back Bay, 2009) 13.
63. Ibid. 9.
64. Ibid. 11.

we can come to understand our intimacy with the natural world and begin to learn how our decisions and actions need to take the intelligibility of the whole into account. Deep, intentional attentiveness can help to remove that difficult, often impenetrable, psychic barrier between humans and the natural world.

While *Laudato Si'* does not provide an extensive analysis of human alienation from the natural world, Pope Francis does ask a profound question that may cut to the core of our disconnection: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (*LS* 160). Asking this question should lead us "to ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?" (*LS* 160). The mechanistic imaginary characteristic of the dominant technocratic paradigm makes it incredibly difficult to grapple with such questions; it is so pervasive that we are unable to resist what the market places before us and we can hardly imagine a different way of understanding the world. We feel trapped.

We need to recover the type of experience of the natural world that is reflected in the life of St. Francis of Assisi:

> Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever [St. Francis] would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation . . . His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists. (*LS* 11)

With St. Francis, we can take time to contemplate creation, "to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us" (*LS* 85). By "paying attention to this manifestation [of God in creation] we learn to see ourselves in relation to all other creatures" (*LS* 85). We can utilize our intellectual knowledge to open up to the insights that we are not aliens on this earth; we are made of the same elements; we are part of the same family; we share DNA with most of the rest of creation. We can come to feel the close bonds of universal communion and know, intellectually *and* affectively, that "nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves . . . we are part of nature, included in nature, in constant interaction with it" (*LS* 139).

A Question of Anthropocentrism

One of the recurrent issues that arises in relation to the question of ecological conversion regards anthropocentrism. Does ecological conversion require a shift away from a conviction that human beings are central to creation and have dominion over all other things? Or does it require a further Copernican revolution that, by relativizing the place of human beings within the created order, decenters us in our worldview? And what might the concrete impact of this revolution be on our economical, political, cultural, and personal decisions? Indeed cannot this question be pointedly asked of the entire approach we have adopted above in so far as it is based on the "turn to the

subject," on conversion, and on the question of personal authenticity—all of which appear to embed this project in anthropocentrism?

Pope Francis also raises the issue of anthropocentrism in *Laudato Si'*, where it is almost always qualified negatively, as tyrannical (*LS* 68), distorted (*LS* 69), excessive (*LS* 116), and misguided (*LS* 118, 119, 122). All these characterizations notwithstanding, Pope Francis leaves open the possibility of a moderate or responsible anthropocentrism that recognizes the special place of human beings in the order of creation; and this recognition is a precondition for demanding that humanity take responsibility for the problems it has caused: "Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued" (*LS* 118). The only alternative to anthropocentrism mentioned by the encyclical is "biocentrism," which itself "would entail adding yet another imbalance" (*LS* 118) to the imbalance of excessive anthropocentrism. As we have already indicated, this issue is sensibly treated in the context of the need to bring a balance in the cultural dialectic between anthropological and cosmological cultural types.

A first level of response to the accusation of an overly anthropocentric approach would be to highlight the fact that each of the dimensions of conversion discussed is predicated on an understanding of the subject as self-transcending. Accordingly, the subject goes beyond what she currently is in each act of knowing and loving to become a fuller and more authentic subject. Each of the conversions considered involves a radical decentering of the subject away from her currently limited horizon to a reorientation to holiness, goodness, truth, and beauty. Without these conversions, appeals to personal authenticity become mere window dressing, even a mask for inauthenticity.

Nonetheless a suspicion of mistaken anthropocentrism may remain. For example, in the discussion around moral conversion we made use of the scale of values, a scale claiming to be normative and hierarchical. Tellingly, this scale places personal value at the penultimate level, just under religious value. Within that scale, the natural world figures only tangentially, as a condition for the possibility for human vitality, near the bottom of the scale.

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that the location of personal value at a higher level on the scale of values is necessarily anthropocentric. Intrinsic to personal value is humanity's taking responsibility for the integrity of the whole scale of values; and this constitutes an elevation and enrichment of the vital, social, and cultural levels of value within the personal. In other words, the good that I become through the exercise of that responsibility is the good of a self who is radically decentered, and who is oriented to the holy, the good, the true, and the beautiful. This encompasses all the ways in which the natural order manifests the divine, is a good in its own right, reveals the truth of our interconnectedness with the whole ecosphere, and draws us out to attend to a natural beauty that is not of our own making.

A second level of response focuses on the theme of the interconnectedness of the ecosphere. In an explanatory account of ecology, things are defined in relation to other things. Human existence is constituted and conditioned by its intricate and complex

interrelationships with the rest of the created order, animate and inanimate. Human beings do not exist as some type of Platonic form independent of the world order in relation to which they emerge and survive. We are children of the cosmos, literally the product of billions of years of cosmic process and biological evolution. We have only just begun to understand the depth of those interconnections with living and nonliving schemes of recurrence. Who would have predicted at the turn of the industrial era that the widespread use of coal and other fossil fuels would threaten us with global climate change in our present era, with unimaginable consequences? So much of human activity has unpredictable and unintended consequences for the complex schemes of recurrence involved in maintaining our global ecology. To know this is to realize that our human good cannot be separated from the good of other species. A commitment to the human good requires a commitment to the whole good for the sake of that whole good, of which we are no more than a part. Without question, this may often require sacrifice on our part, giving up aspects of our extravagant lifestyles, in order that the good of the whole may be fostered.

Finally we comment on the claim that a rejection of anthropocentrism would entail a recognition of the intrinsic value of other species regardless of or apart from their value to humanity. However true this may be, it is difficult to see what this might mean. One may well ask, of value to whom? If not humanity, perhaps to God? In fact, the intrinsic value of the dinosaurs to God did not prevent them from becoming extinct in the fullness of their time and in the providence of divine wisdom. If it had not been so, perhaps the emergence of mammals—also of intrinsic value to God—would have been long delayed, and perhaps even cut short. The point here is that each and every species, including humans, contributes to the good of the whole world process ordered by divine wisdom. Without some direct insight into that wisdom, no concrete conclusions can be drawn about the best course of action here and now from a claim that any particular species has intrinsic value.

Conclusion

The long-term flourishing and indeed survival of our common home, Earth, is the most significant reality at stake in our time. Despite substantial data on the reality and impact of things such as climate change, species loss, habitat degradation, and food sovereignty, we lack the political and social will to deal adequately with the global ecological crisis. As *Laudato Si'* and this article make clear, the crisis alerts us to our need to transform our thinking, attitudes, and behavior with regard to the natural world if we want life on the earth to survive in any way close to the richness, beauty, and diversity that we currently know. This article argues that ecological conversion involves more than extending our concern for justice to include other-than-human life. It challenges us to develop an integral ecology, a new paradigm of justice, one "which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings" (*LS* 15).

We learn that we are most true to ourselves when we are attentive to the community of life within which we live, when we strive to understand the nature and role of all

members of this cosmic family, when we affirm the whole cosmic order under the divine creator as the most comprehensive context of our being, and when we value the whole of the cosmos and take all of it into consideration as we make our choices. In this is authenticity and self-transcendence. Through such transformation, we can become, with God, knowers, co-healers, and lovers of all that exists. It is our hope that this more explanatory and analytic account of what ecological conversion means and what it requires of us can aid us in the arduous transition to a more self-transcendent and authentic way of living in relationship with one another, with all of creation, and with God.

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