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The thesis of Catherine Blanche Williams King entitled
A Philosophy of Act

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies in the School
for Summer and Continuing Education of Georgetown University
has been read and approved.

Francis J. Alson
Mentor, Liberal Studies

December 1, 1990
Date
A PHILOSOPHY OF ACT

A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Batchelor of Arts in Liberal Studies

By

Catherine Blanche Williams King

School for Summer and Continuing Education
Georgetown University
Washington, DC
Date of Final Seminar Presentation
December 4, 1990
This thesis is fundamentally a personal and philosophical exploration of what it means to act in the world.

I have drawn mainly on the philosophical work of Dr. Bernard Lonergan and Dr. Emil Piscitelli, giving a brief account of the areas of their work that apply to my questions. The first part of the thesis is this account and concerns the structure of human consciousness. It includes a discussion and schema of the six conversions, the four fundamental questions, the dialectical human attitudes, and the general structure of dialectical foundations. The method we use is named general empirical method and is described on page two.

The second part is a development of a philosophy of act. Here we distinguish interior from exterior acts and distinguish feeling, thinking, bodily acts and language from one another.
All four are shown in their relationship to meaning and the development of the self as actor. Meaning itself is shown in its multiplicity and dynamism toward language and Being. The finality of act and the series of final acts as meaningful is understood as constitutive of self as well as of human history.

A dialectic of act is shown to have three possibilities governing the statement, "I am..." -- compulsive, apathetic or committed. This is related to human development which is shown as a conscious differentiation from the psyche, things in the world, other people and the Divine. This development is related to "Foundational Dialectics" and both are shown to be oriented towards an autonomy of self. The autonomous person in turn is shown to seek a new and integrated relationship with these other dimensions of human life through meaningful act and language. "Dialectical Foundations" reveals this development in its dynamic vectoral movements, creating, healing, and praxis, or in the dynamic interplay of differentiation, interrelationship and integration of human consciousness. These relationships are explained.

Individual act is understood in its meaning-absolute dimension and language in its meaning-speculative dimension. Act is shown to constitute the self while act and language create new possibilities for self and others.

Language, both interior and exterior, is shown in its speculative dimension of human being in that we cannot choose how to act unless we can speculate about the possibilities in thought as inner and outer language.
The questions I ask in the beginning are answered in the conclusion, the last one being concerned with the meaning of faith. The structure of human consciousness is shown to be the dynamic structure of faith centered around the flux of past, present and future. Simply put, with human knowing, we understand and know before we act. With human faith, we act before we understand and know. As the structure is shown to be dynamic, faith and understanding are not opposed but work together in the dynamism of human life. Human act makes faith and understanding concrete and historical in the community of other human beings.
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I. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy has always been known to explore the inner recesses of what is commonly taken for granted. New and dynamic paradigms of thought often emerge unexpected out of what seemed before silly questions and airy speculation. Such may be the question of act. What is act, this thing that we always seem to be doing? What does it mean to act in the world? Does it really matter what we do or do not do?

In following our questions and insights, we will be drawing mainly from the work of Dr. Bernard Lonergan and his student, Dr. Emil Piscitelli. In his major work, Insight, A Study of Human Understanding\(^1\), Dr. Lonergan identifies the fundamental kinds of questions we ask as human beings. He then invites each of us to reflect on his cognitional theory, to reflect on our actual conscious operations, and then to discover and identify with the general structure of these questions within our own consciousness. His epistemology, then, is rooted in the person's own reflection on and appropriation of a person's own conscious operations.

In his paper, "The Fundamental Attitudes of the Liberally Educated Person: Foundational Dialectics,"\(^2\) Dr. Piscitelli has given theoretical form to the fundamental
sets of attitudes attendant to each of the four general questions of consciousness isolated by Dr. Lonergan. These attitudes are dialectical in that they relate to one another in a dynamic, polemical and excisive way as we approach each particular question in our lives. Both philosophers regard the occurrence of insights as central to their continuing philosophical inquiry. Questions are prior to insights and insights are distinct from conceptualizations.

The method employed with these works is what Lonergan calls general empirical method. That is, the method is general because it draws on data not limited to the physical sciences. General empirical method includes the data of the actual operations of human consciousness. It is empirical because the evidence can be found by any human being within his/her own conscious operations. It is method because it is a "normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results."\(^3\)

Though their exploration of the realm of human interiority includes act, there remain questions about it that I would like to explore further. Does the notion of act differ from what is expressed in both philosophers' work as openness to understanding, knowing, the good and the ultimately good, though these are also in some way act? Is not this openness aimed ultimately at an existential act -- at a moment of closure or a series of progressive closures? How is this moment of closure different than the operations
of consciousness themselves? Can and should this closure be authentically isolated in theory from the operative structure of consciousness though these operations are intrinsically related and are in some way the same? What is the relationship of act to the spoken word? What does this act as a moment in history mean to me as a person? What does it mean to others? Is what I do ultimately worthwhile in some way?
II. BACKGROUND

Dr. Piscitelli creatively builds on Dr. Lonergan's work by bringing it into an interrelative dialogue with recent contributions in the fields of hermeneutics and the philosophy of language. His seminal paper, "Foundational Dialectics," is an expression of his insights surrounding this study as drawn from the question, "What does it mean to be a liberally educated person?" While the different philosophical nuances between these two philosophers are not our concern here, it is important to recognize that, in our discussion of attitudes, conversions and praxis we will be drawing from Dr. Piscitelli's work which, though it rests on the genius of Dr. Lonergan's contribution to philosophy, still transcends it in the area of our questioning.

It is not my purpose to repeat here in an exhaustive way the nuances of the theoretical works we will draw from, but rather it is to give a hopefully comprehensive summary in order to lend a general continuity to my own work. It is important to remember, however, that while these theoretical works are important as philosophical theory, they are far more important as doorways into the dynamic and recurrent operations of mind.

Conversion

Human consciousness as learning has essentially two dynamisms operating within us. There is the normal and
normative dynamism of the world that we are born into and about which we ask. We experience, we wonder, we formulate and ask questions and, when we have insights, we come to understand. What we understand we can express in response to questions given us. This process is dynamic in that it is a constant and myriad ebb and flow of a sometimes seemingly arbitrary accumulation and loss of some aspects of meaning which have been questioned and understood. Over the years we build up a rich store of experiences that we can remember and refer to.

The second dynamism has to do with protrepsis\(^4\) or conversion. By conversion we do not mean information of some kind to which we can refer, nor do we mean a set of premisses or logical first propositions. Rather, by conversion we mean a substantial change of the self who regards what is experienced and remembered. It is "a fundamental and momentous change in the human reality itself," in the person as person. Conversion is experienced as something "intensely personal" and affects us to the very roots of the our existence.\(^5\) As it is a change of the person as person, it is concrete and manifests itself to us as a profound change in how we understand ourselves, things, and people in the world, what we find interesting and worthy of reflection, and what our life values are. Conversion is an insight, but of profound and sometimes earth-shaking proportions and once it is undergone, it has a kind of
trickle-down effect as all experience and memory are now understood in a new light. Conversion is dynamic, however, as it is tied to the everyday events in our lives as we work through them. In this way, it is never finished but always ongoing and "never a serene and secure possession." Rather we are always in the process of withdrawal from inauthenticity. 6 When we are authentic, we are ourselves in an embrace of our own dynamic orientations towards what is meaningful, intelligible, reasonable and good.

Accounts of both insights and conversions are commonly recorded in countless historical documents. St. Augustine's Confessions, for one example, shows a clear series of insights and conversions. In "Foundational Dialectics", however, six different conversions are isolated and given theoretical expression. The conversions are named, aesthetic, intellectual, rhetorical, philosophical, moral and religious; but because they are integral to human consciousness as a dynamic and structured whole, we will show them as they emerge from and relate to the other moments of human consciousness that are given theoretical voice in "Foundational Dialectics."

**Foundational Dialectics**

"Foundational Dialectics" is a work that seeks to answer the question, "What does it mean to be a liberally educated person?", and to give a firm theoretical foundation
to the arts, the sciences, humanities and philosophy itself. In doing this it identifies conversion as the appropriation of the attitudes of openness to understanding, openness to knowing, and hope along with the fundamental orientations to the meaningful, the true, and the good, or what is really worthwhile.

Conversion is described as a foundational decision and commitment to this openness which, as we said above, is always a withdrawal from inauthenticity and never a complete identification with what is meaningful, what is true, or what is worthwhile. In this work, human consciousness is shown to be in part a sublating and sublated set of four kinds of universal questions, each accompanied by three dialectical attitudes and a possible conversion or set of conversions corresponding to it. The questions, attitudes, and conversions are moments or series of moments in the dynamism we experience as human living. As we will see from our brief exposition, the six conversions are dialectically related to the lower viewpoint attitudes in each of the four dialectics. In order to understand this relationship more concretely, we shall turn our exposition to focusing briefly on the generation of each dialectic, its general question, its lower viewpoint attitudes and its conversion or set of conversions which allow us to take a higher viewpoint.
Below is a schema representing the structure of human consciousness.

### Schema For Foundational Dialectics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude: Openness to Understanding</th>
<th>&gt;&gt; &gt;</th>
<th>Openness to Knowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversion:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>Rhetorical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>Philosophical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions:</td>
<td>* What *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* is it?</td>
<td>* Is it *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude: Naivete' Scepticism</td>
<td>Dogmatism Relativism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In search of:</td>
<td>Common Sense Security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of:</td>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dialectic generally refers to tension and here it refers to the self-conscious tension or conflict that we are involved in in the very personal activity of daily living. Conversion itself is generally related to dialectic in that...
dialectic is the structure of the process of overcoming basic inner human conflicts. The notion of dialectic allows us to recognize that as persons each of us are a community of selves in a community of other persons who are also involved in the same tensions.8

Dialectic has three dimensions. First, as structure, dialectic has four moments in the conscious order. These moments can be understood as the underlying structure of each of the above four schema. There is the initial position, the counter position, a false compromise (a confusion of the first two) and a higher viewpoint. The first three positions are named lower viewpoints.

The initial position is the least thought out position, the counter-position is the rejection of and a reaction to the initial position, the false compromise is an attempt to have it both ways, and the higher viewpoint is a true reconciliation of all the other positions. The higher viewpoint represents the attitudes of openness to understanding and knowing and a real human hope for what is truly worthwhile. From the higher viewpoint the truth and falsity of all the lower viewpoints can be known. The higher viewpoint reveals that what is true in the initial position is falsified in the counterposition and vice versa, while the compromising position preserves not only what is true about the initial position and counter position but also what is false about both. The higher viewpoint alone preserves what is true about all the lower viewpoints while eliminating what is false about all of them as well.

In the relationship between the three lower viewpoints and the respective conversion the lower viewpoints (the initial, counter and common sense compromise) are always ambiguous and call for incisiveness. That is, they always
carry in them a truth as well as a falsity which call for
dialectical thought. It is because of this inherent
ambiguity that we must move through the moments of the three
lower viewpoints, distinguishing the evidence from what is
unfounded, the truth from the falsity, and the good from the
bad, if we are to arrive at a position that reflects the
inner movement of the conversions. This dialectical and
dynamic relationship of the lower viewpoints and attitudes
with the higher viewpoint and conversion points up again why
conversion is only a possibility and never complete. For
our experience is ever ongoing, and ever in need of
understanding, reflective thought and evaluation.

Second, as dialogue the dialectical structure is our
inner conversation that is commonly referred to in
literature as a "stream of consciousness." Dialectical
dialogue reveals the interpersonal relationship of our four
inner selves who correspond with each other in our inner
domain around the issue at hand. The self of the initial
position is the "Unthinker," the self of the counter-
position is the "half-baked thinker," the self of the false
compromise is the "Common Sense Thinker" or the "Great
Compromiser," and the self of the higher viewpoint is the
"Authentic Self." These are the four moments of our
conscious inner selves shown as isolated and related to one
another.
Third, dialectic is the tensional relationship between the three lower viewpoints and the higher viewpoint, and as such, it is the conversation with reality that we are. The objectives of meaning (first dialectic), truth (second dialectic), worth (third dialectic) and ultimate worth (fourth dialectic) are the objectives of our desires mediated through the four kinds of questions and culminating in the content of the conversation itself, which we come to be and, ultimately, we are. "To be a human being is to live within the horizon in tension of meaning, truth, and worth."10

Though their questions, attitudes and conversions are different, each of the four dialectics is dialectical in that each shares the same tensional structure -- that is they all have these four moments. Each dialectic is a dialogue, in that there is a back and forth reflective and argumentative dimension to the inner stream of consciousness which reveals the interpersonal nature of human interiority; and each dialectic is a conversation -- that is, the conversation is always about something that is real. Dialectic as structure, dialogue, and conversation are three dimensions of the same human reality that we are as persons.11

The higher viewpoint of the first dialectic is the attitude of openness to understanding. This attitude of openness is rooted in human wonder which reveals human
beings as being fundamentally oriented towards what is meaningful and intelligible. As such, this dialectic is the foundation for the arts and sciences.

The dialectic of the attitude of openness to understanding has two distinct "sides." So it can be called a theoretical (science) or aesthetic (art) dialectic. As theoretical the dialectic reveals the foundation of scientific inquiry, theory formation, and conceptual articulation. As aesthetic the dialectic reveals the foundation of artistic self-understanding, artistic self-expression, and symbolic explorations of meaning. 12

The question of the first dialectic is the universal form of the question, "What is it?", which generally anticipates meaning and intelligibility as objective, and anticipates understanding and meaning as being satisfying. Art and science are both expressions of mankind's desire to understand. The artist makes an object out of how s/he understands the meaning of the self through art in order to understand him/herself, and to express and bring this understanding to others. The scientist transcends description by pursuing theoretical explanation -- that is, by relating things to each other rather than relating things to us -- thereby subjectifying, or bringing the world to the subject, who desires to understand it. General questions of the type, "What is it?", can be answered in an infinite number of ways. 13

To be open to understanding, then, means that we recognize and embrace within ourselves the intention of our
own human wonder which, though we cannot understand everything about everything, nevertheless remains unrestricted in its orientation towards meaning. This is not a blind commitment but rather emerges from our paying attention to our own operation of human wonder which is evident in the simplicity of waking up in the morning, as well as in the complexity and excitement of scientific discovery. To identify with our own wonder is also to understand that the real world is not merely "already out there now," in front of our face, or "already in here now," inside our heads,14 or a dualistic combination of both; but it is to understand that the reality of the universe is intelligible and that when we ask questions, we anticipate answers that are both meaningful and intelligent. That is, we are able to understand that something is being meant, as well as what that something is.

To understand that the self is constituted by meaning and constitutes the self by meaning, then, is to be aesthetically converted. Similarly, to understand that the reality of the world is intrinsically intelligible -- that is, the real world is what is to be understood and can be understood -- is to be intellectually converted. Though neither the artist nor the scientist may have a name for his state of affairs or his viewpoint with regard to meaning and intelligibility, still both the artist and the scientist are operating out of their respective converted horizon.15
Both aesthetic and intellectual conversion are human possibilities; but they are only possible after a level of development has been attained. This development is a development out of the lower viewpoints. That is, both lower viewpoints in each dialectic are each involved in truth as well as falsity. The common sense compromiser, a confusion of the two poles, is a person with a slippery mixture of half-truths and tangled arguments -- a person whose position changes only as quick as the focus of the subject matter or the company s/he is in. In the first dialectic, the two lower viewpoint attitudes are naivety and scepticism.

Naivety and scepticism are dialectical precisely because of their developmental nature. That is, in the beginning a child has a natural belief and trust in the world and other human beings. The child needs to depend on others before s/he is ready to understand and participate in the world as an autonomous human being. With development towards responsible autonomy, however, this natural trust and belief gives way to intelligent trust and belief which is aimed ultimately at the terminal value of intelligently discriminating and understanding for oneself. When it does not -- when we either refuse to understand for ourselves, or if those in authority do not foster our developing autonomy -- then we fall into the position of naivety. When we are naive, we want others to understand for us.
However, the naive person is in a struggle with life. This is so because few, if any, can live so sheltered a life that we never experience the dilemma of needing to understand for ourselves, even if we do not want to. When this happens and the naive person is pressured by the problems of real living, the possibility of scepticism can become a reality. Once our naive selves realize that we cannot believe everyone's answers, or trust everyone to do or be what we want, then we swing to the opposite pole and refuse to believe or trust anything or anyone. Scepticism, the counterposition of the dialectic of understanding, is born from the dilemma of our naive selves in our life struggle with the need to understand for ourselves. What was indiscriminate trust and belief in naivete', now becomes indiscriminate doubt in the sceptic. When we are sceptical, we doubt everything, even at the many times when we could really understand for ourselves.

Naivete' and scepticism, then, are dialectical in that each have their positive as well as their negative moments. As negative, naivete' indiscriminately believes and trusts; and scepticism indiscriminately questions and doubts. As negative, they both seek a false security. Our naive selves uncritically seek the security of others' understanding, which is a false way to live because other people cannot live our lives for us. Our sceptical selves seek the security of never believing or trusting anything or anyone
but ourselves, which is a false way to live because other people can and do contribute to our own understanding. What is true about our naive selves, and what is taken up in the higher viewpoint, is that we understand that we must begin by belief and trust, but that belief and trust must be discriminate, and is for the sake of understanding for ourselves. What is true about our sceptical selves, and also taken up into the higher viewpoint, is that every doubt hides an authentic question but that doubt must give way to questions, and questions give way to insights -- understanding for oneself. As positive, whatever security either position can attain has to do with understanding for ourselves in community with others. 16

The higher viewpoint of the second dialectic is the attitude of openness to knowing, or being attuned with the truth. Whereas the question, "What is it?" intends what is meaningful and intelligible, the question of the second dialectic is the question, "Is it so?" and intends the truth and ultimately the real. Whereas meaningful and intelligible answers are many, answers for the truth about the real are only two: yes or no. The second dialectic sublates the first dialectic because we cannot know the truth about something until we first understand what it is. The "it" in the "Is it so?" question refers to the same "it" in the "What is it?" question.
In this dialectic we also find the possibility of two conversions: rhetorical and philosophical. With rhetorical conversion the distinction is made and kept between a person and the truth the person is telling. At the end of Agathon's speech in Plato's Symposium Socrates says, "The truth, lovely Agathon,...you cannot refute, but Socrates is easily refuted." Rhetorical conversion is what is operative in the pursuit of the fields of the humanities where commitment to the truth of human living is the governing principle. It is the mark of a truly civilized culture. Rhetorical conversion, like aesthetic and intellectual conversion in the first dialectic, can be and has been operative in history without being methodically distinguished or appropriated. That is, we can be in the performance of the conversions, as with Socrates above, without critical analysis or reflective appropriation of the attitude we are actually performing. Philosophical conversion, on the other hand, is just this reflective understanding and appropriation of one's own intelligence and reasonableness. It is what Bernard Lonergan is calling "the self-appropriation of the knower," and is the basis of his major contribution to the field of philosophy. 17

This dialectic is called critical. This is so because, even though self-appropriation is a personal performance in that the evidence is not to be found in a book or done for us by someone else, nevertheless there is good reason for
doing so. In other words, it is not a blind leap of faith but rather an acceptance of a reasonable account of what it means to know. If we explore the foundations of knowing, we will discover why.

... knowing makes no semantic sense unless it is the truth that is known; and knowing the truth makes no semantic sense unless it implies we have reached the real. In other words, we know the real by making true judgments and a true judgment is one that says of what is, that it is and of what is not, that it is not. Moreover, the intentional demand for the truth expressed by the question, Is it so?, is a demand for an unconditioned, a kind of absolute. An indication of this demand for an unconditioned is to be found in the form of the answer that is required to satisfy the question: there is an absolute distinction between the yes and the no. In other words, between yes and no there is no third possibility in terms of what the question demands.

Similarly, there is no third possibility between existence and non-existence. The distinction, then, is similarly absolute. The following schema shows the semantic correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>implies</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing</td>
<td></td>
<td>What is true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth</td>
<td>implies</td>
<td>What is real</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It cannot be claimed that something is a matter of fact without also claiming that it is true. "There is no such thing as an untrue fact...."\(^1\)

The implication of truth is further evident in the natural affiliation of human beings with truth-telling. That is, when we speak, the universal assumption is that we
are speaking about what is true. To say what we think is untrue takes a reflective effort; whereas no effort is needed to speak of what is actually experienced and understood.

Though this analysis reveals the intention of human speech to be an intention of the absolute or an unconditioned, and though there is in fact an absolute distinction between our judgments of yes and no, still human judgments are not unconditionally absolute or unqualified. In order for this to be so, we would have to know everything about everything. There is, then, evidence for making a distinction between what is a formally or unconditioned absolute which human beings can never attain, and a conditioned absolute whose conditions happen in fact to be fulfilled: A virtually unconditioned absolute. It becomes absolute by virtue of having all of its conditions fulfilled. Human knowing has been operating under this principle throughout recorded history.

Philosophy is about the love of knowledge. To be philosophically converted is to understand what human knowing is. It is to know that what we know is always a conditioned knowing which happens to have its conditions fulfilled. It is also to know that absolute unconditional knowledge is not humanly possible, though there is no limit to our questions for knowledge and though a virtually unconditioned knowledge is. To know knowing, then, is to
have fulfilled conditions -- we have discovered by personal investigation cognitional operations which demand a virtually unconditioned in order to know, which in turn, demands that we submit our proposals to the reasonable and relevant questions of others. We make judgements based on sufficient, not exhaustive, evidence, and when we know, we can operate in reality in terms of what we know. We can know human knowing, then, in a virtually unconditioned way -- by virtue of the evidence of the conditions being fulfilled, we know what knowing is, and we know that we know, when we know.

Similar to the first dialectic, the possible conversions in the dialectic of knowing, rhetorical and philosophical, are possibilities in relationship to two polemical lower viewpoints and a confused compromise. These two attitudes are named dogmatism and relativism.

Just as naivete' is a derailment of our natural trust and belief, so dogmatism also is a derailment of our natural need to live by an accepted wisdom of some kind before we are able to be critically reflective and make judgments for ourselves. Our natural "doctrinalism" is not yet dogmatism, however, as long as it remains open to the possibilities of criticism. The dogmatist, then, is the classic case of the mind that is closed to reasonable criticism and discourse. In our dogmatist frame of mind we identify our intention and our natural orientation towards truth with ourselves as
having or being truth. The dogmatist thinks, "It is true because I am saying it," rather than, "I am saying it because it is true." We listen only to what we want to hear, and we suppress all reasonable questions because, if we listen, we also might have to think through, criticize and change our own positions. We often are good at criticizing other positions, but we do not want to, and often cannot, defend our own. 20

The dogmatist's ambiguous motivations are our desire for certainty, and our fear of being wrong. So when exposure to the intelligent and reasonable questions of others destroys our unthought-out, unevenced dogmatic positions, and if we cannot give up our fear of being wrong along with our need for certainty, we are forced into a new strategy of defense: To protect ourselves from being wrong by making judgments that do not stand up to intelligent criticism, we cease to make any judgments at all. The response to the failure of the absolute certainty of dogmatism is the attitude of relativism -- the position that claims "the only thing that is certain is that nothing is certain." When we take this position, however, we not only save ourselves from being wrong by not making any judgments, but also we assure ourselves that we will never make any true judgments, be right or wrong, or know what is true about anything. 21
As the dogmatist needs no evidence to hold a position, the relativist will not take a position until all of the evidence is in. That is, the dogmatist makes judgments uncritically without evidence because we must be right; while the relativist is uncritical because we cannot be right until all evidence is in, or we have absolute knowledge. As either dogmatists or relativists we demand too much of ourselves. We either demand to be the Divine, or to have Divine knowledge. The dogmatist in us thinks we actually do know truth absolutely, and the relativist in us thinks that we must know truth absolutely if we are to ever know anything at all. Neither are tenable positions and are at odds with real human living.

Being open to the truth, then, requires that we transcend both dogmatism and relativism by preserving what is true in these lower viewpoints while at the same time eliminating what is false in them. What is true about dogmatism is that we are willing to make a judgment. What is false about dogmatism is that judgment is unevidenced and only for the purpose of self-defense. What is true about relativism is that we need evidence before making a judgment. What is false about it is our expectation that the finite human mind can acquire infinite understanding so that we can know everything. To transcend these two lower viewpoints, then, is to go forward with an understanding that our minds are in fact finite but our intention is
infinite. To make true judgments about the real is to say what in fact has been shown to be the case, or not the case, but also to know that no final expression of truth can be said in human speech. "There is no knowing without a reflective act of understanding that grasps the sufficiency of evidence expressed by a virtually unconditioned."\textsuperscript{22} To be rhetorically converted, then is to understand that all truth is expressed in a judgement or series of judgments, that truth comes through human language, that no human being holds absolute unconditioned knowledge, and that we must listen in order to understand.

Philosophical conversion is methodological in that it is the "self appropriation of the knower" which implies that the real is recognized as what we attentively and intelligently grasp and reasonably affirm.\textsuperscript{23}

As the last two dialectics are rooted in human wonder, the next two are rooted in spontaneous and reflective human awe. It is awe of the moral being of others in the third dialectic, the moral/existential dialectic, that brings us to question our own spontaneous orientation towards the good in this dialectic of value, or the good. Moral conversion rests on the appropriation of this spontaneous, and reflective, orientation towards the good and our fundamental desire to be involved in what is really worthwhile. Moral conversion requires a commitment to seeking out and then doing what is really worthwhile, and not just what is
pleasant or vacuously self-serving. It is a recognition that true self-service is not at odds with what is also truly good for others. It requires, then, thoughtful reflection, decision, and, in the end, responsible action. As the first dialectic is the dialectic of intelligence and the second dialectic is the dialectic of reasonableness, so the third dialectic is the dialectic of responsibility.

The governing question of the dialectic of value is the operative question, "Is it really worthwhile?" Like the conversions in the first and second dialectic, the higher viewpoint which emerges from moral conversion is a resolution of two polemical lower viewpoints and an absurd compromise. The two lower viewpoints are optimism on the one hand, and pessimism on the other.

Similar to the other lower viewpoints, optimism and pessimism have their potentially fruitful moments -- that is, each has its truth as well as its falsity. Optimism springs from our spontaneous hope and confidence in life. In the beginning others take responsibility for us, but again, in its authentic mode this is for the sake of our ultimately taking responsibility for ourselves. The optimist, however, takes our spontaneous hope and confidence and turns it into an irresponsibility. All is right with the world in the optimist's view and human beings will always do what is right if given the chance. In life situations, our optimistic selves allow the situation to
make our decisions for us, and thereby subtly we think we avoid responsibility for what is done. Optimism leads, in its worst form, to a paralysis of human action and can make mere spectators out of us rather than responsible people trying to live a good life. The optimist tends to think that our freedom lies only in our spontaneity and good intentions and not in our ability and willingness to seriously reflect on what is good and really worthwhile doing.

When the optimist becomes involved in a serious moral or political problem which we must take responsibility for, our optimistic world will fall apart. When success, the end run of the lower viewpoints of this dialectic, proves itself not to be guaranteed as expected by the optimist, we tend to turn from our optimism to its polar opposite, pessimism. Instead of success that is expected by the optimist, now survival is the most that the pessimist can look forward to. Where there was before a pseudo-security of a false vision drawn on the irresponsibility of the optimist and based on unmediated desire, now there is the pseudo-security of thinking that we can at least guarantee our own survival from a protectionist frame of mind based on fear. Just like our optimist selves thought that all human beings are good just like we think we are, so the pessimist now thinks that all human beings are motivated by their immediate self-interest just like we think we are.
Pessimism at its worst results in a vacuous individuality. We know that, even though we might think we can come to rely only on ourselves, in reality we cannot guarantee our own survival. Nevertheless, we think we ought to be able to. The one thing that a pessimist can be successful at is making our own human falseness into a reality, and in propounding the half-truth that in the end, we are all dead anyway.

Similar to the previous lower viewpoints, optimism and pessimism both are intrinsically true as well as false. The optimist's attitude is true in that human beings need a vision of what is humanly good before we can hope for anything. What is false about it is that, as human beings, we must participate in the creation of the good, for what is available to us without our participation is only its possibility. On the other hand, the pessimist's attitude is true in that we are responsible for ourselves, but not only for ourselves or out of an immediate self-interest. We must put forth an effort to protect and care for ourselves and others. This is done not out of unwarranted fear but rather out of a thoughtful and deliberate reflection "that results in a meaningful and true vision of the human good...."25

In the fourth dialectic it is awe that we experience when, as with the mystic, we recognize the Transcendent and Mysterious Presence that resides in and can be overheard in
authentic human speech as the truth that comes through it. It is what draws us to it as our intelligence and reflectiveness is heightened to meet it with our questions for understanding and reflection. In the third dialectic moral conversion is our identification with what is understood and judged to be good. In the fourth dialectic religious conversion is in part the recognition of life as mysteriously given, but undeserved, and the expression of gratitude for it.

The question that governs the religious dialectic is the question, "Is it ultimately meaningful, true and worthwhile?" This is not a question that we might offhandedly ask, but rather is a question that quietly and implicitly informs the other three questions and ultimately all of human life. It is something we live in, for mankind is not a religious being by virtue of his religious stance, but rather we are religious by virtue of the fact that we ask the religious question.

In their most basic form both of these dialectics are about our most fundamental attitude towards human life itself. That is, foundational to human life is the desire to spontaneously and confidently reach out for life itself with the expectation that it will be fulfilling. The desire to be, then, is central to these questions of human consciousness, and especially so for these two questions which fundamentally are concerned with value -- what is
worthwhile, and what is ultimately worthwhile. It is not merely life that we desire, but we desire also the good life.

The dialectics of value make desire into a central theme. If to live is to desire to be, then to live humanly is to desire to be self-consciously, to be oneself. Our immediate desires can be frustrated: and when they are, we can come to feel that the world might be hostile towards us. However, even then we can experience and interpret the resistance that reality puts on our desires as a creative discipline that asks us to master our environment or to create a more human environment.... all human desires go beyond the immediacy of spontaneous desire: the desires to understand, to say, to know, and to be involved in what is really worthwhile, are all grounded in wonder and awe, mediated by questions, and potentially unrestricted in scope. For this reason, no finite object or objects can ever fully satisfy human passions. Human love is never less than and always more than immediate desire.

Both dialectics are dialectics of hope in that they are philosophical and systematic in their explanation of the structure of human consciousness and the exploration of human desire as foundational to human existence. This is a philosophy of human consciousness which includes within it the general dialectical outline of the structure of the religious question. As philosophical it can critically show the evidence for portraying the human hope for what is ultimately meaningful, true and worthwhile. It is a philosophical statement which claims as evidence the structure of consciousness itself as given. As a religious statement, Dr. Piscitelli does not apologize for his own
religious vision which is informed by his own philosophical understanding, and vice versa. Nor do I. The structure of consciousness itself is a dynamism of faith seeking understanding and understanding happening, which in turn in faith seeks further understanding. Furthermore, there is no philosophy that is not implicitly informed by a religious vision of some kind -- no non-religious persons. That is, we have either faced up to life and death issues, or we have refused to do so in our self-blindedness. Once we have faced up to them, there are only two ways to go - "yes" or "no." Only by appropriating our humaness by living within what we have understood to be our own exigencies will we find the evidence for what it means to know and be ourselves.28

Religious conversion emerges out of this dialectics of hope as a reconciliation of the two lower viewpoints, sacralism and secularism and a compromise that drifts incoherently back and forth between the two polar views. Simply put, sacralism is a religious optimism and secularism is a religious pessimism.

When our natural and spontaneous awe at the truly wonderful mysteries of life become for us owned and even deserved by us, when life as a gift freely given becomes life as owed to us, then we have embraced the lower viewpoint attitude of sacralism. For our sacralist selves, love is a raw desire which, if mediated by intelligence,
reasonableness and responsibility, becomes domesticated by man; when in reality, we as sacralists try to domesticate mystery by claiming it for our own and deriving for it some human justification. "The sacralist lacks a faith that would listen and respond to the mystery of a divine all-giving love." 29

From our sacralist point of view we act as if God has his "pre-established plan" and we and our group of "true believers" are the ones who are privy to it. All human suffering is necessary for some higher purpose, and moral evil is provided so that good (and we) may ultimately triumph. In this we ultimately blame God for our own moral evil and then justify Divine action to suit our lack of true understanding. We want to "understand" God in order to control the Divine Mystery (magic). As sacralists, we recognize no mystery as mystery but rather "understand" mystery in a way that fits our truncated and idolatrous (egotistical and triumphalist) view of it. For this viewpoint there is no true knowing, but rather a blind conformity to dogmas appropriated uncritically (our own) and shouted out against others and what is conceived as their own unthought-out dogmas (projection). Our own chosen ecclesiastical structure is the corral of "our God," of our false hope that is really an expectation of a deserved guarantee of a divine security, certainty and success, all leading up to the self-justification of the sacralist.
Here, in the dialectical question where the issue of faith becomes explicit, the sacralist thinks faith is a "blind leap into the dark" which we have, in our self-justifying martyrdom, freely taken and for which we are owed infinite divine allegiance. It is not an authentic conversion, or series of conversions that can be shared intelligently with others and which depends on the dynamic concreteness of daily life to be worked out in a mysterious human/Divine relationship.  

The polemical reaction to the many failures of sacralism is the emergent attitude of secularism. As sacralists, it turns out that we are "done-in" by the development of our own powers of observation, questions, understanding and reflection on living a life by sacralist principles. For, to the extent that we reflect on our sacralist position, we must notice that our ideas of "non-mysterious transcendence" have untenable existential consequences. Simply put, there is no "pay-off" for what we are calling faith, at least not the kind of pay-off we expect. When our "faith" (blind belief) does not "work," and if we are honest about the questions raised by the abrasion of our dogma and our experience, we are liable to experience a faith crisis of profound proportions. We finally reject our sacralist views and take on the attitude of secularism.
For our secularist selves, God is either a grand illusion because, if we cannot control our fate by the publicity of our "belief," then He must not be who we think He says he is; or God is an evil, infinitely hostile, sado-masochistic force because there is evil in the universe and, therefore, God must be responsible for it. Our right to existence, which we have preserved from our sacralist view, instead of being owed to us, is now being unfairly taken from us. Ressentiment\textsuperscript{32}, then, pervades the attitude of the secularist. Our most fundamental concern becomes the avoidance of death which we think we do not deserve.

The common sense compromise of this religious dialectic manifests itself in one way by the modern-day sacralist who "religiously" goes to church every Sunday, while acting out of our secularist attitude during the week in our competitive world that systematically degenerates our authentic desire for the good into "bottom line" principles devoid of anything but a relativistic, home-spun, quaint ethics.

Just as the lower viewpoints of the previous dialectics hold the undifferentiated seeds of their respective conversions, so sacralism and secularism hold the seeds of religious conversion. That is, they each hold a truth within their position, though it is undifferentiated from what is false about it. What is true about the sacralist position is our fundamental and spontaneous joy at the
project of life itself. The desire itself, though often unnamed, is always ultimately for something beyond what any human being or finite thing can fulfill. We have a spontaneous expectation in the goodness of life, and it is for something. What is false about sacralism is that this life and our desire of it is already a gift, and therefore not something we can wrest to ourselves by virtue of our attempts at self-justification, or an expectation that because it is given, it is also deserved. Religious conversion understands the desire itself to be a gift of God, for God, and responds by living life out of an attitude, not of "keeping score," but rather out of a joyful gratitude to have been invited into existence itself as a truly undeserving guest.

What is true about secularism is that the religious attitude must be worked out in concrete daily life as the mysterious power of God working through us. In other words, the religious person experiences God in human history. The secularist rightly questions the sacralist notion of God as a "somewhere in the future" magical transcendence that is exempted from the here and now. What is false about it is that the secularist, like the sacralist, thinks existence is deserved, but unlike the sacralist, we think it is given just to be unfairly taken away. What the sacralist and secularist both fail to see is that the goodness of life is what is already given. However, because we are ultimately
free, goodness is always given as a possibility. It is for us to bring our own human goodness into existence. As human beings we must participate in our fate, but our destiny lies in how we choose to be.

Religious conversion, in all authentic religious traditions, has been expressed fundamentally as a very real human humility in the face of the greater Mystery Who has given life, and that we as human beings are undeserving of it. It is experienced as the gift of existence, but also as a movement beyond into existence as an unlimited passion and love for the Infinite who is Infinite Love itself.33

In this work, it is both implied and explicitly stated that a refined theoretical understanding of the conversions is no substitute for the conversions themselves. A theoretical understanding can, however, promote conversion itself. Conversion remains a daily activity and does not reside in a referential understanding of any philosophical work, but in its hermeneutical relationship to the reader. The conversions are actually, then, constitutive of the person and not merely some information, or even some great truth, that we can speak about.34

Praxis -- Dialectical Foundations

The unification of all these "Foundational Dialectics" is theoretically expressed by Dr. Piscitelli as the dialectic of praxis. By praxis we mean "the relationship
between human understanding and knowing on the one hand, and human action on the other. As related to our above meditation, praxis refers to the relationship between the first two dialectics and the last two. That is, the first and second dialectic are questions about understanding and knowing which are aimed at the intelligible, meaningful and to what is reasonable and true; whereas, the third and fourth dialectic are aimed at deliberation (is it worthwhile?) and at decision (is it ultimately worthwhile?) about what we have understood to really be so. Hence, praxis refers to the difference between understanding and knowing the truth on the one hand, and deliberating, deciding and acting on the other. Praxis, then, is the dynamic relationship, and not the act itself. Rather it has act as its dialectical end.

Our meditation on "Foundational Dialectics" reveals that as human beings we are fundamentally oriented towards meaning, truth, worth (value) and being involved in what is really and ultimately worthwhile. These are not abstract options but rather performances. These performances are factually and transculturally the dynamic structure of what we are. As such there are three ways we can approach them in life. They are common sense praxis, nihilistic praxis and converted praxis. Common sense here refers to the undifferentiated positions, ignorance and understanding, truth and falsity, good and bad of the lower viewpoints.
First, we can do them and **neglect** to identify ourselves with them or commit ourselves to them (common sense praxis). Second, we can do them but **refuse** to identify with them and self-consciously reject them as being impossible to perform (nihilistic praxis); or finally we can do them, try to identify with them, commit ourselves to them, and appropriate them as much as we can given our "fallibility, moral impotence, and factual disorientation to the meaningful-intelligible, the true, the good, and the holy (converted praxis)."\(^{37}\)

These three possibilities, then, constitute the overarching dialectic of **praxis**, which is the dialectic of dialectics. That is, the initial position is common sense praxis which has as its terminal values a life of security, certainty, success and ultimate self-justification. It is the person who is living out of all of the lower viewpoints and in effect is a soul who has understanding mixed with double ignorance, truth mixed with falsity, goodness mixed with evil, and love mixed with hate. The **counter position** in this dialectic of dialectics is nihilistic praxis. This refers to a person who has seen the falsity of common sense praxis and therefore rejects it, but who has not understood, known, valued or loved ourselves or other human beings as part of a larger intelligent, knowing, good and loving Mysteriousness who has given to us the freedom and grace to seek Him/Her and therefore values and loves us as a part of
the eternal reality. The nihilist has understood the false and blind faith of common sense praxis but as a person is entirely faithless. There is no compromise in the dialectic of dialectics. The higher viewpoint of this dialectic of dialectics is converted praxis. This is the person who is living through an identification with all of the conversions. That is, a person who is attempting to withdraw from inauthenticity: "from misunderstanding, from untruth, from irresponsibility, and from lack of love and the proper attunement to the Divine." 

In a following paper Dr. Piscitelli raises the further question of the foundations of the dialectics themselves or "Dialectical Foundations." Here praxis, as the three possible relationships between knowing and doing, is shown to be one vector in a set of three distinct, interrelated and integral vectors. First, there is the methodic vector, which is a movement from "below upwards": from naivete' and scepticism through the question for understanding to intellectual conversion; from dogmatism and relativism through the question for knowing the truth to philosophical conversion; and from optimism and pessimism through the question for the good to moral conversion. Second, there is the foundational-hermeneutic vector which is a movement from "above downwards": from an aesthetic fidelity which manifests meaningful human expression that speaks to and heals our naive, sceptical, and common sense stupidity; from
a rhetorical fidelity manifesting the truly wise word that speaks to and heals our dogmatic, relativistic, and common sense unreasoning and unreasonable foolishness; from a religious fidelity to God's own word that is a meaningful, truly wise, good and loving word that speaks to and heals our irresponsibility and our freedom disoriented by lack of fidelity to ourselves, to others, to the world and to God.\textsuperscript{41}

Dr. Piscitelli's work on the complementary relationship between method and language\textsuperscript{42} is revealed in "Foundational Dialectics" as well as in the explanation of the above vectoral movements. It is an expansion on Dr. Lonergan's exposition of the conversions which is understood from only a methodical point of view. The foundational-hermeneutical conversions (aesthetic, rhetorical and religious\textsuperscript{43}) emerged out of the discovery of this complementary relationship, and though "method promotes thought self-consciously into the domain of interiority,"\textsuperscript{44} still conversions are historical possibilities and have been long before method ever came on the scene. That is, self-constitution is distinct from self-appropriation.

Although the methodic appropriation of the meaning of meaning is ever an act of the subject, still the constitution of meaning is the constitution of the subject himself. The constitution of meaning is the foundational question of which the question of method is only a part: The existential subject is a knower, speaker-hearer, and a lover. As a substance the self is constituted as a being and a transcendent causality alone could account for its ontological constitution. However, the subject as subject is the existential subject who freely constitutes human
meaning in the history of his self-expression as spirit in the world.  

In other words, historically we constitute ourselves by meaning without necessarily reflecting about it or knowing that this is what we are doing. All knowing is applied to the content of what is meaningful other than the question of meaningfulness itself. Given this fact, there are three distinct states of being that are possible with regard to the theories of meaning. First, we can come to reflect on the theory itself and understand this through theory. We then take it into ourselves (appropriate) the theory as true by recognizing the evidence for its truth within our own operations and affirming that this is indeed the structure of what we are. We then try to living in a conscious awareness and acceptance of what has been shown and evidenced of what we are. This, as we have seen, is philosophical conversion. Second, we can appropriate a theory that inadequately accounts for the actual conscious operations of historical human beings and therefore live in a kind of forgetfulness, a way that is at odds with our own conscious operations. Third, we can understand the theory in a referential way while continuing to operatively constitute ourselves by historical meaning, as people have been doing all along, and at the same time fail to make the connection between the theory and our own actual operations.
A good part of education hinges on the insight that what we are exploring, while it first must be known on a referential level, nevertheless, it finds its real value by being manifest in our ability to understand and know ourselves through what it is that we are studying, and to be changed by it. These distinctions also point up the differences between the sciences, the humanities, and philosophy. While science emphasizes its explorative/referential side and the humanities emphasize the explorative/referential/constitutive side, both have a complementary opposite and respective side which are subordinate but also operative. These distinctions also point up an inherent problem in the humanities. That is, as a differentiated culture institutionalizes and accelerates the education of its people, it discreetly sets up the possibility of uncritically turning the humanities into a formally referential learning facility. Our implicit notion of knowledge becomes a cumulative rather than a developmental notion.

The constitutive side (foundational hermeneutics) of cognitional theory, then, is self-appropriation. Below is a schema showing the relationships of the vectors and their dynamism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialectical Vector</th>
<th>Dialectical Movement</th>
<th>Dialectical Mediation</th>
<th>Dialectical Orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>From Below Conversion Upwards</td>
<td>Eros</td>
<td>Creating (Wisdom)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundational Hermeneutics</td>
<td>From Above Downwards</td>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Agape</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praxis</td>
<td>From Within Outwards (Zetesis)</td>
<td>Love (Caritas)</td>
<td>Acting (Love)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methodic Vector (creating)  

Hermeneutic Vector (healing)

Desire to Know  

Desire to Say

Praxis Vector (action)

Integration

Differentiation (Questions)  

Interrelationship (Statements)

From below upwards  

From above downwards

In order to tie this vectoral analysis into our own experience we need only to meditate on our experience of events in space and time. That is, we are addressed by an event as meaningful and as we pay attention to it (any event or conversation) we approach it with a set of understandings already in place. As we listen to another person or hear ourselves speak, our current set of meanings is being
differentiated by the meaning of what is happening or being said. *Questions* emerge out of the difference between what is being said, and our current set of meanings (experiences, images, memories, knowledge, internal doctrines). Our experiencing/questioning itself constitutes the methodical vector. It is our desire to know promoting us through our experience and questions to understanding and knowing, from below upwards. Concomitantly, as we speak to another, we are contributing to the other and their own dynamism of knowing, as well as contributing further to our own understanding of what we are saying. The experiencing/saying itself constitutes the foundational hermeneutics vector. It is our desire to say promoting us to speak about what we have, in our fidelity to the truth, come to understand and know — a movement from above downwards — a movement from our orientation and fidelity to the truth back into human speech in history.

A meaningful event enters into us, sometimes gently, sometimes violently, sometimes welcome, sometimes not; but always we are changed by it to one degree or another. It is the coming together of two disparate things that constitutes its creating.\(^{49}\) Therefore, we are constantly beginning anew with a changed and changing set of meanings in place. Our ongoing inner dialogue now speaks of this new meaning, holding it to the light of our questioning. As the inner dialogue continues, the new meaning begins to unfold itself
to us, and as it does, we begin to relate (healing) to our present set of meanings. The new insights have a "trickle down" effect as oftentimes much time must pass before the interrelationship of understandings takes place\textsuperscript{50}. Until a unity of mind is struck, we often can live out of competing and confusing understandings of what, in fact, the case may really be.

The experience of the relationship between what we have understood to be true and good and what we actually do in life constitutes the praxis vector. The praxis vector constitutes the structure of the possibility of self-transcendence in operation in that we have raised the further questions, understood what is intelligent, meaningful, true and good, and have said and acted in accordance with what we have discovered -- we have performatively moved beyond ourselves in meaning in the universe. This is the movement from "within outwards and beyond" and is the desire to be in operation, promoting us towards our own self-transcendence. Both common sense praxis and nihilistic praxis are derailments of this possibility of authentic self-transcendence.\textsuperscript{51}
III. A PHILOSOPHY OF ACT

We are exploring the meaning of human act. So far we have concentrated on "Foundational Dialectics" by discovering the attitudes, questions and conversions of the operations of interiority (cognitional theory), and what it means to know (epistemology). We have shown how the dialectics of the human attitudes have a "Dialectical Foundations," that there are three dynamic moments in this foundations, methodical/creative, hermeneutical/healing, and praxis/action, and that these foundations are fundamentally motivated by the human desires to know, to say and ultimately to be. Human act has been approached from the viewpoint of interiority and has been related in some way to being itself. That is, the desire to be underlies the vector of praxis, which is itself the relationship between knowing and acting. In order to understand the meaning of act in a fuller way, then, we must first explore briefly the meaning of meaning itself, and then the ultimate context of human act, Being itself (ontology). We are not doing an exhaustive study of either meaning or being. However, just as we needed to state our method earlier, so too we need to touch on these issues in order to find human act in its more comprehensive setting.
Experience, Meaning and Being

My questions have emerged partly out of a fundamental sense of a bothersome dichotomy or dualism between bodily act -- simply doing something in the world -- and the speech act itself -- saying something in the world. There is also the problem of the "thinking/feeling" dichotomy, a distinction often made in our language today. The key to dissolving these dichotomies, while also maintaining what is authentic about their distinctions, is in an understanding of meaning itself.

When we desire to know, to say and to be, what we are intending is meaning; and if meaning means (as in mediation) anything of any import, it is real Being itself that is meaning itself to us, and it is real Being about which we ask. We have already seen the semantic correlation between what is true and what is real. It also makes no sense to say that what is real is not. What we gain in Being from constituting ourselves in meaningfulness may be incremental, or as Lonergan puts it, proportionate and isomorphic with our human minds, and we may not know everything about everything that is, but there is nothing in the universe that cannot be questioned by human beings. While our minds are finite in what we can know, our questions are of the infinite. When we ask about something, we are asking about what it means, which is another way of asking, "What is it saying to me?"; and when we say that something is
meaningful, we are saying that it is disclosive, or that it is revealing itself to us; or, in other words, it is revealing to us what it is. Furthermore, an answer to the question, "What is it?" is an answer that can be spoken. When we understand what something is, then, we are able to say what it means. As existential human beings, then, we are also ourselves meaningful in that we are constantly in a process of revealing the meaning of ourselves, or what we are (Being), to ourselves and to others. To the extent that we are experiencing, inquiring, understanding and knowing for ourselves, we are continually constituting ourselves with the meaning that has been disclosed to us in our experience and in our quest. Some meaning is objective and referential in that we can recall it; some meaning is referential and constitutive in that we actually make it what we are -- constitute ourselves by it. Both kinds of meaning are affective, either directly or remotely, but constitutive meaning says of us what we are. We are, then, in a constant flux of meaning -- both constituting ourselves by it (understanding, knowing and valuing), being constituted by it, as well as expressing it in the world (saying and acting).

Meaning is the intention of both the desire-to-say and the desire-to-be; for meaning is the object of the quest of the existential subject. The concrete mediation of the desire-to-be in language and in action results in the achievement of meaningfulness. What is meaningful is what is disclosive of the lived experience of the existential subject. Intelligibil-
ity, then, is only the objective moment in the quest of the existential subject for meaning. Objective truth which is the adequation of the mind with reality is only the objective moment of the quest of the existential subject for a truthfulness that reveals the true meaning of the self. Meaning as the internal coherence of a system or theory expressed in the concept and truth as the adequacy of the mind to reality expressed objectively as a knowledge of the real are not negated but are preserved and sublated in the quest of the existential subject for the meaningful expressed in the symbol and the truthful expressed in the faithful word.

To relate this to the schema of "Foundational Dialectics," the first dialectic, the "what is it?" question, has its speculative dimension oriented towards the self, the world, other people, the Divine as objective and conceptual. Objectification is necessary in order to understand anything. Objectification in this sense only means the "what" of what is being questioned. This is what we mean by referential knowledge. Speculation is about the possibilities of what something is. But the speculation of the existential subject, while we need to question and speculate about what something is, also is about what we are to be. This future orientation of the existential subject is what emerges through the third and fourth dialectic questions, "is it really worthwhile?" and "is it really and ultimately worthwhile?" This is where reference ultimately becomes self-constitution.

Questions about our experience arise from becoming aware of the differences of the meaning of the world and the meaning of the moment of the self, whether it be referential
as memory, or constitutive as person. The question itself arises out of a kind of abrasion between two sets of meaning. Experience itself rests on a prior distinction of the self from an other. The question cannot occur unless at first there is a recognition of difference of meaningful self from meaningful other. The question as eros is this meaning of self seeking to know and ultimately to be in the meaning of the other. Saying is a saying of what is also meaningful and as such constitutes our seeking to participate in Being through the conversation with other beings. As our meditation on the back-and-forth movement of meaning shows, Being itself can be experienced as an intrusion, sometimes radical, sometimes gentle. The question in this sense, we must remember, is not a reflective question or a choice we have, but is an immediate response to experience and our riveted participation in it. There is a sense in much of experience that we are magnetized to it until we understand what it is that is present to us. In this, we have little or no choice but are compelled to understanding by the intrusion of being and our powerful and erotic desire to have this thing within our realm of meaning, whether we like it or not. And even if we do not, tremendous satisfaction comes from knowing, from settling the question, as it were, and cooling the fires of existential care and love, but only to be lit again.
We can also say of meaning that it is rich and it is moving. For example, when a poet writes a poem, s/he means to express some personal experience in a way that finds the meaning of the words in a close interpretive embrace with the experience. That is, abstraction is couched in expression which resides at the level of imagery and symbol with the conceptual understanding of the experience subordinated to the symbolic expression. But as time passes, what the poet meant when s/he wrote and what the poem means can change and often becomes quite different. This can be so even to the poet whose new experiences can play back into the poem and create new possibilities of meaning. We can differentiate meaning in the following way:

1. What a person means to express by act or word
2. What meaning is discovered by someone else
3. What residual meaning is left to discover as time continues

Human meaningfulness can be differentiated in many ways, but for our purposes, we will use the following distinctions:

Images  Feelings  Thoughts  Bodily Acts  Language

All of these dimensions are also human act in that they take place in time and place, i.e., an act of understanding is an interior act. Each of these dimensions of human being are meaningful, but in different ways. As meaningful, the four can be understood, not as divisions, but rather as distinctions within a kind of continuum within another
continuum. That is, feelings and images are not divided from, but rather are oriented towards thoughts. Thoughts are not divided from, but rather are oriented towards, bodily acts; none of these are divided from but rather are oriented towards language acts in that anything that is meaningful (felt, thought, done) can also be expressed in language. This constitutes the first continuum and is the moment or moments when we have felt, thought, acted and said what we mean. It is a continuum of meaning from within interiority outward.

The second continuum is the meaning that is taken up by others in what has been exteriorly expressed in act or language, or in events in the world, and the residual meaning that lives, however dormant, in the meaningful act or word that has been posited in the world. This second continuum is the stuff of living human history. Its fullness is testified to in the need of historians to re-write history with each generation's new set of experiences that must be seen "in the light of" the past, and the past seen "in the light of" the new and ever-changing present.

Just as meaningful images and feelings are oriented toward thought, and just as thought has been shown to be an inner dialogue and conversation, so meaningful bodily acts are oriented toward language and both are an outer dialogue and conversation. But because this outer conversation is a
conversation with other meaningful human beings who are also questioning and a world that is also meaningful, we find within language itself a kind of "dual duality." That is, we have shown one duality in that meaning in its fullness can become more, less, or different than what is meant. The second duality becomes evident from the fact that in language we can say what we do not really mean, and we can mean something that does not yet exist. Language itself, then, has implied in it a possibility of human duality. That is, aside from the fluidity of meaning itself, language can contain the grand possibilities of speculative wonder and achievement, and at the same time it can be the empty projection of a person who does not truly mean what is said. Language becomes worse than doing nothing when it is used as lip service, or self-destructive when it turns to lies in an attempt to manipulate and control others, or to say what we do not really intend. Language as speculative, then, can be understood as a dialogue with others (interpersonal dimension), a conversation with others (about what is real or what is to be or not to be real); and in its religious dimension it can be understood as an intimate and loving, interpersonal conversation with the Divine.

Speculative thought and language hold the key, then, to the possibility of meaningful personal and/or communal possibilities themselves as it is only through meaningful language that we can project ourselves towards the future in
understanding, knowledge, value and ultimate value. Bodily acts, however, are manifestive of the wholeness of the existential human being in his momentary meaningfulness and in his truth. Bodily acts say of someone what s/he is. Language, on the other hand, says of someone what s/he can/will be. Furthermore, bodily acts are not speculative as language is and therefore do not hold the possibility of duplicity that language does. For when we do what we say, what we mean cannot be too far behind. On the other hand, though language has primacy in that it constitutes the door to our own speculative development, sometimes what someone means need not be said. In Shakespeare's *King Lear* when Cordelia is called upon by her father to profess her love for him she says, must I heave my heart into my mouth? Bodily acts can speak to another as clearly as language can. The inner meaningful dialogue can be set on fire by simple and subtle bodily acts. The meaningfulness of our being, though it gains its very substance and dynamism from its possibilities in speech, gains its full existential import through human beings committing their whole persons to act.

To say what we said before in a different way, these continuums of images, feeling, thought, bodily act and language have a reverse dynamism also. That is, what is heard in language and events act upon us. As exterior, they are meaningful events in the world, language and bodily acts. They enter our thinking, and to the degree that they
are meaningful in a truly personal way, they affect our feelings and images, and begin to set the seeds for even further questions. We are, then, a unity. We are individual human beings, whose unity is dynamic and developmental -- a unity in tension.55

There are interior acts and exterior acts, then, all of which are meaningful. And meaning is what has been meant by Being. The interior acts set up the conditions (possibilities) for exterior acts;56 and as images, feelings, thoughts, can change, exterior acts set up the conditions for interior acts. What we take in in our experience, and what meaning and truth we choose to constitute ourselves by through our acts, becomes the "who" of who we are.

Act and Continuous Finality

"Foundational Dialectics" is a detailed account of interior acts which have their culmination in exterior acts. Exterior bodily and language acts are nothing less than events in history which also have a finality or a closure aspect to them. That is, events have an internal and interrelative coherence and also have beginnings and ends. An event, and an act within an event, take on the aspects of a game or a story. They are dramatic and are meaningful to us in their aspect of finality, their overness, their unified, whole and finished quality. The human mind seeks
unity and if events, stories, games, etc., did not have beginnings and ends, we would not be able to understand them or talk about them. The intrinsic finitude of the human mind comes clear in this phenomenon. For understanding is either of a unified whole or of a relationship. It is through this wholeness and consequent finitude that the meaning becomes able to be intelligible and understood by us. Its meaning then is carried forward in the continuum through the fluidity of meaning in the symbolism of language. These events are historical in that they can never be exactly repeated. Images of act and event in time and place are memories which we can re-experience in order to live again in a bringing forward of meaning for new creative possibilities in our lives today.

The residual meaning lives in each event that we participate in and can come alive in other's understanding unbeknownst to us and even long after we have lived. What each of us judge to be true and good, then, and in turn what each of us posit in the world as acts that are disclosive of ourselves, again becomes meaningful for others to take up for themselves, interpreted in their meaningfulness, judged to be true or false, good or bad, ultimately worthwhile or not. Though we cannot know what overplay of meaning resides in our acts, they nevertheless become new meaning possibilities for others.
Though man is responsible for evil acts by his free choice, human responsibility does not imply that man chooses every aspect and consequence of his acts; there remain unchosen aspects to every human action. If his human freedom is finite and motivated, man is not responsible solely to himself. As such man is capable of forgiveness and reconciliation.

We are already in human history by already being in life. But we have seen that what I say and what I do, or even what I do not say and do, is constitutive of myself and presents historical meaning to others. In this continuum, then, is all of human history, and in it we either create, maintain, inhibit or destroy ourselves and the human communities we live in.

The Dialectic of Act — Compulsion, Apathy and Commitment

Returning to "Foundational Dialectics," we remember that the central activity of each of the four dialectics is a question. Accompanying each of the questions also is a set of attitudes. Meaningful bodily act, however, though it is ultimately the dialectical end of the conscious activities themselves, is itself not a question or an attitude. Rather, act can be described as a statement or an answer. That is, if praxis is the relationship between knowing and acting, and if what we posit in the world is ultimately what we are (desire to be) as meaningful historical persons, then act as a statement is a statement that says of me who I am as I participate in the event in question — what I have
performatively chosen as being meaningful, true and worthwhile to do.

A dialectic of act emerges from the dialectical attitudes and, from the point of view of interiority, is the dialectical end of the questioning activity. From the point of view of the world of other human beings, however, the dialectic of act is the substance of history and consequently constitutes for us a new beginning. For how we act in the world, besides a statement of who we are, is also an eventual starting point for me as well as for others as we go forward in our lives.

The dialectic of act focuses on the three general guiding principles or ideologies of act as each of the attitudes emerge into human act itself. The difference between the dialectical attitudes and this dialectic of act is that the central activity is the incomplete statement, "I am...." Like the questions of the "Foundational Dialectics" the "I am...." is a general statement. And like the questions and attitudes, the act is already something we are involved in just by being alive. We posit meaning in the world just by being; but being in the world continually presents us with choices. To live is to not be able to not be. Experience is moving and demands that we take part in it. Valuing is implied in our very response to the dynamism of living. But to consider how we posit meaning in the world is to reflectively take up the question of value
itself, to look critically at how we have been in the world, and to speculate about how we want to be. The dialectic of act, then, exposes in a different way the roadblocks to our openness to possibilities for freely choosing the meaning of ourselves and the meaning of the acts that we posit in events in human history. The explanation of the lower viewpoint attitudes in "Foundational Dialectics" does this also. The dialectic of act is a continuation of this explanation.

Though our acts are an expression of all of our attitudes, we tend to choose areas of operation which foster the overriding attitudes in our consciousness. For example, the naive person is naive in that s/he refuses to understand for him/herself. The internal act of understanding, or refusing to understand in this case, will emerge in external act and choices of circumstances that play into and support the naivete' of the person as long as this is our choice. We will see how this works itself out and how our desires and fears are at the bottom of this dilemma of being in the world.

The dialectic of act shares the same structure as the dialectical attitudes. The following is a schema of the dialectic of act that is drawn from the general structure of "Foundational Dialectics":
Committed in My Whole Self  
To the Really and Ultimately Worthwhile  
In Human History

/       \
/        \  I am...
\        \  
Compulsive   Apathetic

These ideologies or principles represent three ways that we mediate our acts in human history. The "I am...." follows the question, "should I do it?" which is the last question in the series of questions, "What is it?" (intelligence), "Is it so?" (truth), "Is it worthwhile doing?" (deliberation), and "Should I do it?" (decision). The question, "Should I do it?" can be answered by a "yes" or a "no." However, answering "yes" or "no" is only remotely and still only possibly meaningful as participatory and creative of human history. The actual doing of what has been decided in language constitutes our existential embrace of the chosen possibilities that reside in the events of history with other persons in the world. In act is where I am as existential historical human being.

There is a subtle difference in the development of the question that we should point out here. There is the question, "What should I do?" which focuses on the self and, as we have said, is answered by the existential act which says of me what "I am...." in history. There is also the
question, "Is it worthwhile?" which focuses on the thing to be done. This difference constitutes the tensional relationship between what the individual is and what the larger world and human community is. When the act is committed in terms of either in human history, however, the difference between these two things dissolves into a unification of creative or destructive being in the world.

The acts of compulsion, apathy and commitment also share the dialectical structure of the attitudes in that they are also tensional. Both compulsion and apathy have a right and a wrong about them. What is right about the compulsive act is that we are not afraid to do something -- to act; and we might even be right when we do by the exercise of right and good opinion or by pure chance. What is wrong with the compulsive act is that it is not thought out. We are not fully involved with what we are doing, right or wrong, because we have not thought it through. That is, we have not understood it, judged it to be so, and valued it as something truly worthwhile doing. If it is wrong, we are still responsible and accountable for our acts. When we are children and have parents and teachers to guide us, we can act within a framework of someone else's understanding, judgment and value. But when they are gone, we are called upon to critically guide ourselves in community with others who are trying to also guide themselves. We need to understand, judge, value and act in
an autonomous way. If we do not, we become like driverless trucks in human history, an arbitrary splotch of meaning that does not know what it is, that it is, or whether it is good or not. A personal ideology of unthinking is no excuse for irresponsibility.

What is true about the apathetic "act" is that we are not the center of the world and, therefore, our authentic act can sometimes be that we do not act at all. I can be passively open to Being. Things can happen around me that do not need my contribution to be in a creative way. What is false about the apathetic act is that a personal ideology of apathy is a failure to take up the responsibility of moving the world forward in the creative ways that we can and which are continual creative possibilities in each of our lives. The apathetic actor does not realize that there is no in-between when it comes to living human lives. We are either contributing to its spiral upward, or downward. By withdrawing from act in my own life I necessarily contribute to the demise of human being itself.

Dialectic and Praxis

In common sense praxis, living unreflectively out of all of the lower viewpoints, there is a disparity about what a person knows in two ways. First our knowing itself is disperse. That is, understanding, knowing, valuing, though operative, are often unthought out, halfway thought out or
wrongly thought out resulting in a polymorphism\textsuperscript{58} of knowing and knowing what is good and worthwhile. There is also a disparity between what we know and what we do. That is, even if we have come to know on some level that something is right, doing it is altogether another matter. Complexity and confusion of human being altogether different matters.

On the other hand, a person whose acts are a commitment of the whole self to the ultimately worthwhile in human history is acting out of converted praxis. Knowing is what one has thoroughly and intelligently understood, reasonably judged to be the case. There is a singularity and clarity of mind in the reflection of converted praxis. All of the conversions are operative and flow directly into a loving response to the possibilities present in a life reflectively chosen. There is little or no disparity between what s/he understands and knows on the one hand, and what s/he does on the other. The kind of knowing that has to do with the possibility of his or her own creative act is only referential in its objective moment; but because it is about my own act, it does not remain referential but rather becomes constitutive of the self as subject. Therefore, creative actions in the world flow directly from this self-constitution. In turn, the self is continually being reconstituted by a loving dialogue with the self, the world, other persons and through these things, the Divine.
Similar to the dialectical movement of the lower attitudinal viewpoints, the committed person can act when he is called, which is the truth of compulsion. It is not compulsion, however, because the possibilities of act are understood, reflectively understood in that they are as evidenced as possible, considered for their value, chosen, and then taken up as act in the world. Similarly, the committed person can withhold from acting when it is right to do so, which is the truth of apathy. The development of wisdom is in knowing the difference -- in knowing what can be hoped for only in turning to prayer.

The difference lies partly in the notions of principles of act and ideology of act. To live under an ideology is to live under a doctrine or set of doctrines which, once in place, cannot be questioned, broken through, or superseded. To live under an ideology of compulsion is to live under an operative ideology of act that says we can only act with a minimum of thought in response to what we experience. To live under an ideology of compulsion is to live under an operative ideology of act that says we can only minimally reflect, or not at all. Like the movement of the attitudes, an ideology of apathy is a reaction to the failure of an operative ideology of compulsion. When we act compulsively in response to our experience, it cannot be long before our unthought-out activities draw unfavorable responses from the world and others. When we do not find security, certainty,
success and self-justification, from acting in this way (the aims of common sense praxis), we seek these same things by withdrawing from any acts at all and instituting an operative ideology of apathy.

With either of the ideologies in place, consciousness is operative as set out in "Foundational Dialectics," but only on the shallowest of levels. Consciousness is undifferentiated in this respect in that each of the questions are operative, but not deeply or fully developed. Consciousness is operative, but is in a sense abdicated to the workings of unmediated psychic intentions, the ghostly directions of the world, other people, and to our suitably shallow understanding of what the Divine is, whatever that may be. Our questions are not explored fully making the act in event into a shotgun (compulsion); or a flight from events to the extent that we can, or into a participation by observation (apathy). In living under either ideology, human beings are at odds with ourselves. For in act we are not merely our psyche, nor are we the world, nor are we other people, nor are we God. When we act we are truly individual. And if we have not understood, judged and valued for ourselves, but have abdicated these conscious operations to another, we are truly duplicitous and in existential fact divided against ourselves. Nor when we are in these modes can we return back to these things in a way that bespeaks of our freedom as human beings in the world.
To act in a committed way is not to act out of an ideology, but rather out of a principle. The principle is not a doctrine or set of doctrines that cannot be transcended, but rather is a faithful adherence to the self and its operations. It is fundamentally the principle of understanding. This principle refers us back to the existential concrete of daily living. The principle of understanding is not an ideology because in order to understand, we must question our experience of ourselves, the world, other people and the Divine. Where an ideology of compulsion or apathy limits us to either respond thoughtlessly to whatever happens, or to not respond at all, the principle of understanding allows us to be fully involved with what is really worthwhile, and at the same time know that we are only a part of a larger whole that is ongoing in its mysterious way, and thereby let it happen without being disowned by the experience of things going on without us.

To act out of openness to understanding, openness to knowing, openness to value and to what is ultimately worthwhile is to be totally committed to acting in the world out of an understanding and knowledge of what is really worthwhile. Converted praxis manifests an act that engages the meaning of him/herself, the world, other human beings and the Divine in the particularity and concreteness of human history. There are no guarantees, except the
guarantee that we are responsible for creating the world
together out of the possibilities that are laid out before
us through world events and the history and dynamism of the
human community itself.

Act and Human Development

The development and differentiation of consciousness is
in part a development and deepening of the interplay of our
experience with our inquiry of it. We used the term
"abrasion" earlier when we were exploring how questions
arise from becoming aware of the differences of the meaning
of the world and the meaning of the self. Being as
meaningful becomes present to us in our awareness, first of
the fact that there is something in the world and that this
something is not us, and we are not it. All desire
manifests from this fundamental, intelligent and prior
distinction. Second, questions arise out of the desire to
know what that something is, the desire to say what that
something is, and the desire to be through living in the
Being that is meant and that we have understood and judged
to be good and chosen as worthwhile. I would like to
replace the abrasion metaphor with a more erotic metaphor,
however. For Being as Divine can be understood as a kind of
a beckoning from a Lover who wants above all for His love to
be freely chosen by us. If there is a difference between
Being and the Divine, it is that Being is also human being,
which is not always or necessarily good. The Divine, then, is Being in us that is good and that we have freely chosen to be, and the Being that is also the Good.

The incisive nature of the inner and outer dialogue and conversation is a development towards freeing ourselves from everything that would keep us from an open conversation with Being that is Divine. If the Divine speaks to us through the meaning of the psyche, through the meaning of things in the world and through the meaning of other people, then it is the differentiation of ourselves as individual and autonomous from these things and from the Divine itself, as well as our proper interrelationship with them, that constitutes the purpose of the dialectical structure of consciousness. Development of consciousness towards inquiring, thoughtful, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and lovingly committed acts in events in the world is just this deepening of self -- this autonomy of soul which finds its peace with itself by taking up its own self and taking back what has been abdicated away to others in order to have a right relationship with them. For it is through the truth that they speak and the good that they do that the Divine speaks. A highly developed consciousness is a person who actually has more self.

It must be said that, when we speak of a highly developed consciousness, we are not speaking here of any kind of "intelligence quotient" in the sense of today's
understanding of intelligence -- an intelligence of quickness, accumulation of facts, and competitive progress, though these things are not opposed to it. Rather, we are speaking of a wisdom of differentiation and relationship which is developed, not necessarily from the questions posed in the highly developed fields of inquiry, but rather from questions posed to people in everyday life, whatever that may be. This unfolding of consciousness does not depend on specialization, but rather on the thoughtful appropriation of the paradigms of history coupled with our creative participation in it.

The acts of compulsion and apathy are acts of someone who is not free to participate creatively with the possibilities experienced in human history or to creatively and reflectively involve him/herself in what is truly worthwhile. In reality, we are culpable. In reality, if we abdicate our understanding, what we can truly know, our responsibility and our love, we are only fooling ourselves for we still must act or not act ourselves. To abdicate these things is to give away what is most valuable to us -- our full participation in the being that is given to us in the gift of the possibilities put before us. We cannot in reality abdicate our own conscious operations. We can only forget them and leave them undeveloped, and pretend that true involvement is in some other reality, in some other place and in some other time, or through some other person
in the world. The person who posits acts in the world out of either compulsion or apathy by living out of the confusion of the lower viewpoint attitudes is not truly free to commit him/herself fully to what is really and ultimately worthwhile in human history. Though the historical act may be meaningful, true, and worthwhile doing in reality, when we do not take it into ourselves, as it were, we are positing meaning in the world without truly also constituting ourselves by it. It is residual meaning without my true participation in it.

Though persons can never abdicate their conscious operations fully, polymorphism of consciousness is just this lack of differentiation and then again, the proper interrelationship with these things that we are in tension with. Human development arises out of this dynamic polymorphism and shows its early stages by generally erupting in one of these two approaches.

All acts are motivated by our desires and fears. The desire to live is very simply a desire to be. But more than to merely live, human beings desire to live well, to know what that means and to be able to speak it. In order to do this, we must become ourselves. A self cannot live well until we first become selves. And to become ourselves, is to live in openness to our understanding of ourselves. Compulsion and apathy are motivated by our unmediated desires on the one hand, and our unmediated fears on the
other. Our authentic desires to know, to say and to be involved in what is really worthwhile, and our fears of not being so, are at first attached to ourselves, things in the world and other people. Development can be seen as a movement of desire of and through these things followed by the realization of their limits to fulfill our desire to be. All of the things and people of the world are finite, including ourselves. But our desire is for the infinite, for the Holy, for the Mysterious, for the Divine, for God. The best prescription for boredom for a human being is to be in a position where we know everything, where there is not something new to understand, something new to be, and to love. In the end, nothing can fill the desire for the Divine except the Divine itself.

Development and Foundational Dialectics

Development as differentiation and interrelationship of consciousness ("Dialectical Foundations") shows itself in "Foundational Dialectics" as the dialectical movement from naivete' to scepticism, dogmatism to relativism, optimism to pessimism, and sacralism to secularism, and from all of these up to their corresponding conversions and higher viewpoints. Early on, we must develop our consciousness from our psyche as other. Much of human life is a development of a peaceful and dynamic interrelationship between ourselves as psyche and ourselves as conscious.
Another differentiation occurs when we recognize a distinction between ourselves, other people and things in the world. The lower viewpoint attitudes are manifest from our real need for ourselves, for things, for other people, and the Divine, as well as our need to pull away from these others, to the extent that we misunderstand our relationship with them. Naivete' is our unmediated desire to be in the other, to be or possess ourselves/it/him/her because we have found that we are not these things or people, and because we are not yet ourselves, nor are we God, we find our being (understanding-meaning) in others. Scepticism is our reaction to the discovery that we cannot be or possess it/him/her while at the same time being, or being in possession of ourselves. These are other things and other people in the world, and are not Being itself, or God.

Aesthetic conversion is an openness to the meaning of the self and of the self as other. It has its roots in the struggling distinction of the psyche from consciousness, a kind of flowering of consciousness, and in the corresponding interrelationship of the two in artistic expression, the dramatic pattern of experience and, as language, in writing and poetry. It is projection for the sake of understanding the meaning of the self. Projection here means the objectification of the self as meaningful. The self does not hold all of Being, but rather seeks to be itself and to have a relationship with the Being that means.
Aesthetic conversion is this openness to the meaning that has been folded up in the psyche. The psyche is partly the meaning that was absorbed from experience at a time when consciousness was an undeveloped but living seed, had little or no language for expression, and therefore understood and expressed itself in the primitive language of desire and fear -- image-laden feelings of unbridled joy and guttural, heartfelt cries of pain.

Intellectual conversion is an openness to the language of the things in the world -- their intelligibility. Things do not hold all of Being. They rather speak to us of what they are and of what Being is, and of how they are related to other things and to ourselves. We cannot be them. They are not infinite, and possessing them is never infinitely fulfilling.

Dogmatism and relativism in the second dialectic are the working out of the distinction and then interrelationship of ourselves from ourselves, from thing and others in the world and from God in the realm of truth. Dogmatism is an identification of the self and what one does or says with truth, of those in one's family, tribe, group, and their doctrine, laws and cultural values. Relativism is a reaction to this false identification being differentiated by the truth heard from others. As relativists, no one can have or be the truth. We, our family, tribe, or our group
are not the truth, but rather all of us are oriented towards it.

Rhetorical conversion is an attitude of openness to things in the world, to other human beings as all possible carriers of the truth, but not as the truth itself. As rhetorically converted, we are open to the truth that comes through all language. We are differentiated from things and other people in the world, but also we are interrelated with them as a being apart from them, but still being able to hear the truth that they speak.

Philosophical conversion is an attitude of openness to the truth of ourselves in an intelligent, critical and methodological way. A technical knowledge of and self appropriation of the structure of consciousness is an extension of knowing of the self. It is knowing the self as knower.

Optimism is a lack of distinction of the good from ourselves, the world and from other human beings. All of these things can be good or evil, but are not necessarily. Pessimism is a reaction of disappointment in the realization that all things, people, even ourselves, are not necessarily the good that we expect. Pessimism is the beginning of differentiation of the good from ourselves, the world, and other human beings in order that a right interrelationship can be established.
Moral conversion is a development of this distinction and right interrelationship with ourselves, things in the world and other human beings, which are not necessarily good, but can be good. Much of our development is the development of our possibilities to create ourselves as beings who are good and recognize that to be interrelated with ourselves in an authentic way is to recognize the project of self-creation in goodness is ongoing, and that self-creation is also world creation.

Sacralism is a lack of differentiation from the Divine, God, Being itself. It is a false ownership or possession of the Divine and fails in understanding the Divine as Infinite, Holy and Mysterious Other. Secularism is the beginning of becoming properly distinct from the Divine, but in its stasis, only holds the seeds of a proper relationship with the Divine.

Religious conversion is a recognition that we are not God but our desire is to seek God, and our fear is rooted in a profound awe that we as finite, undeserving beings experience by our very gift of being itself.

Dialectics, Development and Act

Just as the lower viewpoints of naivety, scepticism, dogmatism, relativism, optimism, pessimism, sacralism and secularism are never found in their pure form in human beings, neither will we find that we act in purely
compulsive or apathetic ways. Different kinds of events and situations call forth the expression of different attitudes and viewpoints. For instance, we might be naive in the presence of an authority figure, but dogmatic in the presence of a child.

Briefly, the naive person will act compulsively in that s/he will compulsively (without thought) and indiscriminately do whatever s/he has been told to do, even if it is not to act (apathy). The naive person will seek out situations and people where s/he will not have to think for him/herself. The sceptical person will be apathetic in that s/he refuses to act because understanding cannot be had in principle; of course, a sceptic must act; however, any act will be covered over by a barrage of questions compulsively aimed at the person who has put forth something to understand. The dogmatic person will act compulsively because s/he thinks things do not have to be thought through because s/he identifies himself, his tribe, his group, with the truth, rather than being a seeker of it. The dogmatist will seek out situations where his "knowledge" is not questioned -- positions of authority where things can get done quickly and efficiently -- people who share his/her group, and people who do not know more than he does and do not question openly. The relativist will try not to act (apathy) because nothing can really be known, and how can we act if we do not really know anything? But of course we
must and we do. The relativist’s only real act is to deny that there is any foundation for acting by referring back to the "what is it?" question. It is a compulsion towards needing to know everything about everything before acting on anything. The relativist will seek out situations where he/she can research meaning instead of know any truth, and is not fond of conversing openly with other people, especially those who claim to know the truth.

The **optimist** acts compulsively because everything will be good in the end no matter what we do so we might as well not think about it -- just do it if it feels or seems good and everyone will be happy. The optimist runs from one situation to another doing what good can be done quickly because anything long-term takes creative work and compulsive do-gooders lose their steam when they are faced with a universe and people that are not already good. The **pessimist** tends towards apathy because nothing is really worthwhile doing, except perhaps being compulsively protective of what s/he already has. The pessimist seeks out situations that reflect a good and idealized past, and stays away from people as much as possible. When he/she is around people, his act is to complain.

The **sacralist** compulsively lives life in the religious fast lane because s/he is busy stacking up good acts and open religious rhetoric in his/her favor to pay off God for his/her salvation when the end time comes. And if s/he
slows down, realization might come that God is not owned by any of us. The secularist is apathetic in acting towards the religious question out of denial. The secularist has realized that his "good acts" and religious talk do not pay off in the sense that s/he expects. The secularist compulsively fills his/her life with busy-ness in order to avoid the life/death questions that are now driven under because s/he could not control their answers, and which motivate his/her need to find permanence and eternity in earthly things and man as himself God.

Recounting the nihilist (nihilistic praxis) who is not afraid to answer the religious question, but answers it with a resounding "NO," does not act in a compulsive or an apathetic way. The nihilist reflectively denies the value of his own desire to be which underlies compulsion. If the nihilist would act in a way that reflects what he "knows," s/he would just die, because what the nihilist "knows" is that human life is meaningless. The nihilist also reflectively denies the importance of his own fear of not being, which underlies apathy. The nihilist has reduced him/herself and all human life to an utter worthlessness. As long as s/he remains alive, the nihilist reflectively resists all of his/her own spontaneous and even joyous wonder at life and all that is interesting and good about it. They are just the testimony to the "fact" that human being is at odds with ourselves, with others, with the world
and with our desire to be involved in the infinite. If the nihilist does not die, s/he reflectively waits to watch common sense in its confusion, and conversion in its persecution, and laugh at both of them as they wallow in the utter falsity of their foolish and duplicitous lives. His laughter is the twisted remains of his spontaneous desire to be involved with what is really worthwhile. If the nihilist does act at all, s/he is in a performance of a contradiction. For by the nihilist's own principle, nothing really matters, and if s/he acts, s/he might find that it does, in spite of the reflective position s/he takes.

The development of self in unison with all of our selves, then, is what constitutes the warp and weave, the ugly and the beautiful, the demise and the achievement; the bad and the good, the sinful and the holy of any culture and human community in history.

Human Development and Historical Truth

Besides praxis as the relationship between knowing and doing, then, there is also the relationship between what we do and what in fact is truly good and worthwhile in history. As we have seen from our exposition of the dialectic of knowing (second dialectic), judgment of what is truly good and worthwhile doing and the doing of it (converted praxis) is the isomorphism of the meaning and truth of ourselves with the meaning and truth of what is real. In the sense
that we can speculate about the possibility of what would be
good or bad to create in human history and then make the
possibility into a reality, we do create what is true in
human history through our creative acts and participation in
it. For what is history but our memory of what others have
speculated about and made real? We are creating what is to
be real, good or evil, out of what is possible for us in the
existential time and place of history.

For Dr. Lonergan, knowing and being are isomorphric, and as we have seen, human knowing is a virtually
unconditioned, a conditioned whose conditions happen to be
fulfilled. But when we focus on the difference between
knowing and acting, we can see a difference in their
dynamism. When we know, we know the virtually unconditioned
or we are in conscious relation with a virtually absolute.
But when we act in an event, it is absolute by virtue of the
fact that we have made it a fact. Even though truth is to
be rediscovered and known by each new generation, the fact
as meaningful and true cannot not have been. We find our
absolute, then, in the oneness of the historical event and
our act in it. The event holds the possibilities of
meaning, truth and goodness, as well as the absurdities,
falsities and sinfulness. Like a single finite symbol holds
a myriad of meaning, the event and our act in it is
understood by human intelligence because it is defined, made
finite, has borders, edges, differences and samnesses which
allude to the otherness of things, while at the same time can be explosive and timeless in its creation of meaning. Participation in the event, then, is a participation in the absoluteness of beginnings and ends that cannot be repeated in human history. Though act has its perimeters, it also also joins the fluidity of history, having its meaning at once in its oneness, and at the same time joining its meaning to the ongoingness and creation of history which is present in us.

The back and forth dynamic continuum we spoke of earlier of images, feelings, thoughts, bodily acts and language, then, can be transposed into history also as a back and forth dynamic continuum of meaning, truth and goodness as we develop towards Being or the Divine. This dynamism can also be expressed as a dynamism of formation, deformation and transformation. The formative aspect of human living is what we are in the present in relation to the past. This is what we act out of -- our horizon of the moment. The deformative aspect of our living is our position regarding what we are in the present in relation to the present as our experience of loss of meaning of self and the past in experiencing "abrasion" of new meaning with meaning that is already formed in us. The transformative aspect of our living is our position regarding what we are in the present in relation to our renewal and hope for our continual renewal and our future in Being.
To relate these three terms to the three vectoral movements mentioned earlier, formation relates to what is to be differentiated in the creative movement of differentiation, from below upwards, as the movement of self into the tension of questioning; deformation relates to the state of affairs when the self has been disordered by the infusion of the new. The healing movement, from above downwards, is the interrelationship of the past self, now deformed, with the new (saying to oneself) and/or speaking to the world. Transformation relates to praxis, which speaks of the dynamism of knowing and the finality of doing. Transformation refers to the continually new formation, which, again, will be deformed and transformed in the continual process of human beings striving for the Divine.

As each human being is this dynamism, so human history through our acts is also this dynamism. Each human act is at once a formation made from the past, a deformation of the past by our new acts intertwined with other human beings' acts in events, and a transformation into the new, all of which are present. If there is progress, it is rooted in the creation of the real dynamically progressing towards the Good as Being itself, or what is not good and a demise into nothingness. As we create the real as good we are reaching in this dynamism towards Being in a Divine Mysterious Who is continually revealing His Presence to us, but has graciously given us the freedom to choose to be it.
Language: Word and Act

The enfleshed, incarnate human being, then, in our highest personal achievement, is knowing, saying and doing as a unified whole oriented towards Being itself. In the moment of act, we are no longer in a question, but rather are making a statement of who we are, what kind of person we are, what kind of meaning we have chosen to be formed into from our psychic impressions and our history, the world and other people where the light of Being is continually being carried. It is a dynamism that is ongoing. In the act is the unification of all of my past and what I have come to be up to this time, infused by the meaning of the present event which is also infused with the past, and a creation of new possibilities for the future. I participate in the transforming of the event by virtue of my choosing to participate or not in it, and the way I participate in it. Thereby I also transform in some way all of human history. In the event, possibilities are no longer an issue, but rather I am the meaning I put forth in history. I am nothing less than a part of history on the move. I am my own, as well as part of human history’s formation, deformation and transformation.

From the point of view of historical judgment, there are three things that come to bear on the interpretation of the answer to the questions, "what did this person do?", or, "what happened?", and, "what did s/he—it mean?" First there
is the duplicitous nature of the lower viewpoints (truths mixed half-truths) and their motivations between desires and fears which inhibit or enhances both the doer's understanding and the interpreter's understanding. Secondly, there is the residual and expansive nature of historical meaning as we relate it to new and ongoing experience. What is meant and what it means may be different and even diametrically opposed. Third, there is the relative horizon of the interpreter which may or may not be the same as the person in question. "What happened?", however, becomes tradition in historical legends and texts. Even though with critical history "what happened" has become less fraught with interpretive confusion, "what does it mean?" is still tied to the interpreted meaning of its present relationship with the reader. What the person meant in his own absolute relationship with history comes forward to us through language as meaningful for us in all of its fullness. What is meaningful about human act, then, is carried forth in language into the meaningful possibilities of new generations and their subsequent human act. Without language, there would be no meaningful history.

Meaningful word, then, is the catalyst for meaningful act as we draw on history and interpret its meaning into the constitution of ourselves in the present. Before and after the question, and in its speculative dimension, word reaches out into the penumbra of our horizon of possibilities to
grasp at meaning revealing itself to us through the dynamism of human history. Through these possibilities we choose to create what is good, or evil in the universe. Human act involves us in human history, but language is what carries us along towards the creative horizons for human living.

Human act, then, finds its absolute in the truth of concrete human living. For when we know a virtual absolute of historical human act, we know something that was, is, and always will have been by virtue of its conditions having been fulfilled. In this, it is absolute in that it cannot be stricken from the fabric of human history. In its meaning in actuality it constitutes us and the event. In its meaning as understood and known in language, it constitutes the history of meaning from which we draw our own meaning in the present that we know as human Being.

Both act and word are formative, deformative and transformative. Act is formative in that it says what I am and word because it says what I recognize and mean as paradigmatic. Act and word are deformative because they serve to put forth meaning into the human community. Act says what I am as a human being, word says what I recognize as worthwhile. Both serve to deform by penetrating the meaning of ourselves and the community with new meanings that create a kind of opening in the experience of others. It creates possibilities. Truth is often heard even to the psychic dismay of the hearer. It is the "abrasion" or
"beckoning" we spoke of earlier, of the otherness of Being in the world and my participation in it as my identity in act. I am causing to one degree or another, a deformation of what has been, for the moment, formed in myself and in others.

Just as the formation process is constitutive of myself as well as of human history, so also the deformation or differentiation process is operative on myself as well as others as I speak and act in the world. For I do not always identify fully with what I am saying or with what I am doing. My act or word, then, at the same time that it is differentiating others in the world, is also driving itself back into my own constitution to the extent that my own constitution has a disparity with what I am saying or doing. If Praxis is the relationship between saying and doing on the one hand and the state of one's soul (conversion) on the other, then a complete identity of myself with my act and word as intelligent and good creates a unity of soul with the universe as actually Good and Holy. Such a peace of mind should belong to all of us. However small my act or word is, it is never nothing in its formative, as well as its deformative affect in myself, in others, in the event and in the continual transformation of total human being in the world.
VI. CONCLUSION

In my own study of Dr. Piscitelli's work on "Foundational Dialectics" and "Dialectical Foundations," I am continually struck by the existential "fit" of the theories expressed here. There is, however, a problem with the symbols used to express the tensional attitudes even though these symbols are, as Lonergan would call them, well chosen "primitive terms." The problem is not one of choice of terms, however, but rather it is a problem that is endemic to theoretical expression itself. Simply put, conceptual theoretical language cannot hold the power, the pain, the delight, the longing and the fullness of love that reside in the movement of the dialectics as personal. This is, of course, not a criticism of the work. Rather, it is a recognition of the very argument that is put forth in it. For the argument itself clearly draws the distinction between conceptual theoretical language and the symbolism of interpersonal and affective, religious or poetic communication. For example, the terms naivete' and scepticism cannot tell of the power of the personal drama and inner polemic of a person who has once trusted and then been betrayed, though these terms refer to this very dynamism of this human drama. The conversions are not, as it might seem with a cursory reading, a place removed from the human drama of living. The danger is, then, as with reading any philosophical theoretical work, to overlook the
depth and breadth of its existential import. And it is this depth and breadth that I am referring to here. For the dialectic is not just a method of rhetoric, or merely a philosophical tool, but rather it lives so close to the human soul as to be the soul's fundamental living activity from the very beginning of life.

Returning to my questions, the notion of act is to be distinguished in two ways. Interior acts are conscious acts such as the act of wondering, understanding, formulating, etc. Exterior acts are persons positing meaning in the human community through participation, or lack of participation, in events in that community. Openness is ultimately aimed at being able to act in the world. Acts have both individual existential import and also are constitutive of the human community as part of that community to one degree or another. Acts and events have a finite dimension in that they have beginnings and ends, but also have an infinite dimension in that their meaning constitutes the very fabric of dynamic human possibilities that emerge through language in time. The human individual, and through the individual the larger human community in his/her stream of finite events, is always forming, deforming and transforming ourselves into the dynamism of human being in event that we are. The act as a moment of closure is itself not openness nor does it ask a question, but rather makes a statement of who I am. This exploration
of act is isolated from the operative structure of consciousness by gathering the dialect of attitudes into a dialectic of act revealing a tension in all of them between the ideologies of compulsion on the one hand and apathy on the other. The higher viewpoint of commitment to acting out of the principle of understanding is to free oneself from a fixed ideology and act out the exigencies of one's own conscious operations. That is to act or not act in unison with what is understood, known and judged to be good about what is going forward in Being. It is authentic to isolate the attitudes in this way because it helps to answer the question of the import of human act and the intersection between interiority and exteriority. Interior act is a conversation with Being within ourselves. Exterior act is a conversation with Being in ourselves, in the world and in others.

Word resides in both realms of interiority and exteriority. However, bodily act is constitutive of the person within the historical event as absolute. Exterior word is not necessarily the constitution of the person but rather is the person in recognition of something more or less than s/he may be. Word "speaks back" to the person speaking as we must also listen to ourselves when we speak. Both word and act in exteriority break an opening into the consciousness of ourselves and of others. Language and act through language has a speculative dimension to it as it
allows us to explore possibilities which we can then bring into being through act.

As an individual person I am participating in the human community by constituting human history in all of its good and evil. Whether I act or do not act, I am involved with events as they go forward and by virtue of my human being in meaning. I constitute history to one degree or another, in one dimension or another, all of which adds to or detracts from, the quality of human being as a whole. Just as people before me through their acts have contributed to the history I draw from either by changing the constitution of their own world and/or leaving written texts for those who follow to read, so my acts contribute to those that go after me. I can either choose to act with this in mind, or not to. But does it really matter?

This, of course, is the religious question of ultimate meaning. Once one has made the distinction between oneself as a reflective being and the sea of psychic life that we all are heir to, it becomes clear that what we have been given in each individual history may or may not be attuned with what is really worthwhile doing in this life. In fact, much of human life is given over to reconciling ourselves with ourselves as psychic historical benefactors. Or, to use our own language, to making the distinction between ourselves and ourselves. Life as given and the kind of life that is given are two different things. These two things,
life itself and a kind of life, however, are often confused around the asking of the religious question. Life as given is Being as given -- human being. We are not on the outside looking in, but rather are on the inside looking around, observing what we are, but also creating it, and then, through act, being it.

Human life is a polymorphic fact of our finitude as death-experiencing creatures and the historical fact of evil in human beings. But death is a result of our finitude, not of our participation in meaningful and loving Being that constitutes the very fabric of authentic human being in history. The evil we experience in other human beings and in ourselves, is a result of our own historical choices, even if we are involved in a spiraling way with others before we may know it. But also, as we have seen, we are also heir to a recalcitrant and historical orientation towards what is ordered and intelligent, reasonable and good, and of what is rooted in the finite, but is not essentially the finite. For meaning is what is essential about human being, not the finitude of human beings, though it is in the finite that we find our absolute as human beings.

In the end, what we find in the structure of human consciousness as we have studied it here is the very structure of faith itself. But it is not a blind faith, or a leap in the dark. It is rather a faith that has a dynamic
relationship with human understanding and goodness itself. For when we, in good faith, accept that which we are made of as that which we are called to go forward with, all of the universe is opened up to our questions, even God. Here is where the difference between knowing and doing becomes crucial. For faith is the creative performance of what we cannot humanly know. In terms of the intelligent, reasonable, responsible, moral life, act follows knowing. In terms of going forward in faith in the intrinsic worthwhileness of life, knowing follows doing. In this way, there is no "proof" for the authenticity of a reflective religious life except what we find in the commitment to living it. And to live it is to be it. In the being of it also is the being of it for others in the dynamic moments of of history that mean so much to ourselves as mankind.

All acts are an accumulation of self which tells of a way of life chosen by the person living it, to the person and to others. If my choice speaks of my faith, it also speaks of my responsibility towards other human beings in the world, regardless of their acts towards me. For the concrete constitution of my own meaning is ultimately not in the hands of others, but in my own, given to me by the possibilities that lay before me in life. The choices are often difficult, as people like Socrates, Thomas More and even Jesus can testify to. In our acts, we share in the creation of those possibilities for others, as well as
constitute ourselves freely by them. In an embrace of the seriousness of the human quest to be involved in what is ultimately meaningful, true and good, is an embrace of our own possibilities for being involved in what is ultimately meaningful, true, good. It is, in its end, an embrace of the seriousness of human act, all that stands behind it in history and all that stands in front of it in those who will come after us in the history of the human quest.
Notes


6 Ibid., p. 843.

7 Piscitelli, "Foundational Dialectics," pp. 316, 328, 335.

8 Ibid., pp. 293-294.

9 Ibid., p. 294.

10 Ibid., pp. 294-295.

11 Ibid., pp. 294-295.

12 Ibid., pp. 303-304.

13 Ibid., pp. 304-305.


16 Ibid., pp. 296-305
Ibid., p. 314.
Ibid., p. 306.
Ibid., p. 306.
Ibid., pp. 308-310.
Ibid., p. 310.
Ibid., p. 310-313.
Ibid., p. 314.
Ibid., pp. 322-323.
Ibid., pp. 316-327.
Ibid., p. 309.
Ibid., p. 319.
Ibid., pp. 320-321.
Ibid., p. 329.
Ibid., pp. 330-331.
Ibid., pp. 332-333.
Ibid., p. 333.
Ibid., pp. 333-335.
Ibid., pp. 334-341.
Ibid., p. 339.

Piscitelli, "Dialectical Foundations."


Piscitelli, "Language and Method."

Though Lonergan recognizes moral and religious conversions and both are expressed implicitly as foundational hermeneutical, this aspect of these conversions is not made distinct from method nor are they given theoretical underpinnings as such. Lonergan's proof for the existence of God, though methodologically and conceptually sound, does not find a clear and systematic exploration of method's own presuppositions of mankind's historical, symbolic, religious language itself. Piscitelli, "Language and Method," pp. 998-1016.


Ibid., pp. 616-617.


Piscitelli, "Foundational Dialectics," schema adapted from paper.


Ms. Weil makes this point well when she says, "Moreover, nothing is so rare as to see misfortune fairly portrayed; the tendency is either to treat the unfortunate person as
though catastrophe were his natural vocation, or to ignore the effects of misfortune on the soul, to assume, that is, that the soul can suffer and remain unmarked by it, can fail, in fact, to be recast in misfortune's image."

50 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Here Thomas Kuhn's point is about the paradigm, how it shifts, and how the movement to a new horizon changes how we view all of our previous related insights, which were themselves in their time a movement away from a way of thinking with their subsequent systemizations in the field. Our example is of a single human being, but the principle holds for entire communities or civilizations.

54 Lonergan, *Method In Theology*, pp. 57-99. Dr. Lonergan, in his chapter on "Meaning," makes distinctions in meaning that are somewhat different than my own. I have no complaint about these distinctions, or the further work on meaning in Dr. Piscitelli's work; however, the distinctions I make here are sufficient to answer the questions that I have put forward in my own work.

57 Emil J. Piscitelli, "Methods and Systematic
Reflections, Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy of Religious Symbol: A Critique and Dialectical Transposition,"
original publication unknown, copy in my possession, p. 301.


60 Ibid., pp. 444-446, 449-450.

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